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A PILGRIMAGE TO NEJD.



PORTRAIT OF MR. BLUNT (BY MOLONY). [*Frontispiece,*

A PILGRIMAGE TO NEJD,

THE CRADLE OF THE ARAB RACE.

A VISIT TO THE COURT OF THE ARAB EMIR, AND "OUR PERSIAN CAMPAIGN."

By LADY ANNE BLUNT.

AUTHOR OF "THE BEDOUIN TRIBES OF THE EUPHRATES."

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IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

WITH MAP, PORTRAITS, AND ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE AUTHOR'S DRAWINGS.

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PILGRIMAGE TO NEJD.

CHAPTER XII.

"Je ne trouvai point en eux ces formes que je m'attendais à retrouver dans la patrie de Zeid el Kheil."—GUARMANI.

Nejd horses—Their rarity—Ibn Saoud's stud—The stables at Haïl Some notes of individual mares—The points of a Nejd head—The tribes in the Nefûds and their horses—Meaning of the term "Nejdi"—Recipe for training.

A CHAPTER on the horses we saw at Haïl has been promised, and may as well be given here.

Ibn Rashid's stud is now the most celebrated in Arabia, and has taken the place in public estimation of that stud of Feysul ibn Saoud's which Mr. Palgrave saw sixteen years ago at Riad, and which he described in the picturesque paragraphs which have since been constantly quoted. The cause of this transference of supremacy from Aared to Jebel Shammar, lies in the political changes which have occurred since 1865, and which have taken the leadership of Central Arabia out of the hands of the Ibn Saouds and put it into those of the Emirs of Haïl.

Mohammed ibn Rashid is now not only the most powerful of Bedouin sheykhs, but the richest prince in Arabia; and as such has better means than any other of acquiring the best horses of Nejd, nor have these been neglected by him.

The possession of thoroughbred mares is always among the Arabs a symbol of power; and with the loss of their supreme position in Nejd, the Ibn Saouds have lost their command of the market, and their stud has been allowed to dwindle. The quarrels of the two brothers, Abdallah and Saoud, sons of Feysul, on their father's death, their alternate victories and flights from the capital, and the ruin wrought on them both by the Turks, broke up an establishment which depended on wealth and security for its maintenance; and at the present moment, if common report speaks true, hardly a twentieth part of the old stud remains at Riad. The rest have passed into other hands.

That Feysul's stud in its day was the best in Arabia is probable, and it may be that no collection now to be found there has an equal merit; but there seems little reason for supposing that it differed in anything but degree from what we ourselves saw, or that the animals composing it were distinct from those still owned by the various Bedouin tribes of Nejd. All our inquiries, on the contrary (and we spared no occasion of asking questions), tend to show that it is a mistake to suppose that the horses kept by the Emirs of Riad were a

special breed, preserved in the towns of Aared from time immemorial, or that they differed in any way from those bred elsewhere in Central Arabia. They were, we were repeatedly assured, a collection recruited from the various tribes of the Nefûds,—a very fine collection, no doubt, but still a collection. Every Bedouin we have asked has laughed at the idea of there being a special *Nejd breed*, only found in Aared. In answer to our questions we were informed that in Feysul's time emissaries from Riad were constantly on the look-out for mares wherever they could find them; and that the Emir had often made ghazús against this and that tribe, with no other object than the possession of a particular animal, of a particular breed. The tribe from which he got the best blood, the Hamdani Simri and the Kehilan el-Krush, was the Muteyr (sometimes called the Dushan), while the Beni Khaled, Dafir, Shammar, and even the Anazeh, supplied him with occasional specimens. Abdallah ibn Saoud, his successor, still retains a few of them, but the bulk of the collection was dispersed, many of the best passing into the hands of Metaab and Bender, Mohammed ibn Rashid's predecessors. Mohammed himself follows precisely the same system, except that he does not take by force, but on payment. He makes purchases from all the tribes around, and though he breeds in the town, his collection is constantly recruited from without. Were this not the case, no doubt, it would soon degenerate, as town-

bred horses in Arabia, being stall-fed and getting no sort of exercise, are seldom fit for much. There is a false notion that the oases, such as those of Jebel Shammar and Aared, are spots especially adapted for the rearing of horses, and that the sandy wastes outside contain no pasture. But the very reverse of this is the case. The oases in which the towns stand, produce nothing but date palms and garden produce, nor is there a blade of grass, or even a tuft of camel pasture in their neighbourhood. The townspeople keep no animals except a few camels used for working the wells, and now and then a donkey. Even these must be fed either on corn or dates, which none but the rich can afford. Horses are a luxury reserved only for princes, and even the richest citizens do their travelling from village to village on foot. Longer journeys are performed on dromedaries brought in from the desert for the purpose, which are either the property of Bedouins or held with them by the citizens on shares.

The Nefûds, on the other hand, contain pasture in abundance, not only for camels, but for sheep and horses, and it is in the Nefûds that all these are bred. Ibn Rashid goes every spring with the bulk of his live stock to the desert, and leaves them during part of the summer with the tribes, only a few animals being reserved for use in the town. It cannot be too strongly insisted upon, that the upper plateaux of Nejd, where the towns and villages

are found, are a stony wilderness almost entirely devoid of vegetation, while the Nefûds afford an inexhaustible supply of pasture. The want of water alone limits the pastoral value of these, for the inhabited area is necessarily confined to a radius of twenty or thirty miles round each well,—and wells are rare. These facts have not, I think, been hitherto sufficiently known to be appreciated.

With regard to Ibn Rashid's collection at Haïl we looked it over three or four times in the stables, and saw it out once on a gala day, when each animal was made to look its best. The stables consist of four open yards communicating with each other, in which the animals stand tethered each to a square manger of sun-dried brick. They are not sheltered in any way, but wear long heavy rugs fastened across the chest. They are chained by one or more feet to the ground, and wear no headstalls. It being winter time and they ungroomed, they were all in the roughest possible condition, and, as has been mentioned, our first impression was one of disappointment. When at Haïl they are given no regular exercise, remaining it would seem for weeks together tied up thus, except for a few minutes in the evening, when they are led to drink. They are fed almost entirely on dry barley. In the spring only, for a few weeks, they eat green corn grown on purpose, and then are taken to the Nefûd or on ghazús. It is surprising that

they should be able to do their work under such conditions.

The first yard one enters in going through the stables, contained, when we saw them, from twenty-five to thirty mares. In the second were twenty more, kept in a certain kind of condition for service in case of necessity; but even these get very little exercise. As they stand there in the yard, slovenly and unkempt, they have very little of that air of high breeding one would expect; and it requires considerable imagination to look upon them as indeed the *ne plus ultra* of breeding in Arabia. We made the mistake, too common, of judging horses by condition, for, mounted and in motion, these at once became transfigured.

Here may follow some descriptions of particular animals, written after one of our visits to the stud; these will give a better idea of them than any general remarks. In our notes I find:—

"1. A chestnut Kehîlet el-Krush with three white feet (mutlak el-yemîn), 14 hands, or 14·1, but very powerful. Her head is plainer than most here—it would be thought a good head in England—lean and rather narrow. She has too heavy a neck, but a very fine shoulder, a high wither, legs like steel, hind quarter decidedly coarse, much hair at the heels. More bone than breeding, one is inclined to say, seeing her at her manger, though moving, and with the Emir on her back, one must

be very captious not to admire. She is Mohammed's favourite charger, and of the best blood in Nejd. Ibn Rashid got this strain from Ibn Saoud's stables at Riad, but it came originally from the Muteyr."

"2. A bay Hamdanieh Simri, also from Ibn Saoud's collection, a pretty head, but no other distinction. N.B. This mare is of the same strain as our own mare Sherifa, but inferior to her."

"3. A grey Seglawieh Sheyfi, extremely plain at first sight, with very drooping quarters, and a head in no way remarkable, but with a fine shoulder. This Seglawieh Sheyfi has a great reputation here, and is of special interest as being the last of her race, the only descendant of the famous mare bought by Abbas Pasha, who sent a bullock cart from Egypt all the way to Nejd to fetch her, for she was old, and unable to travel on foot. The story is well known here, and was told to us exactly as we heard it in the north, with the addition that this mare of Ibn Rashid's is the only representative of the strain left in Arabia." *

"4. A dark bay Kehîlet Ajuz, quite 14·2, one white foot, really splendid in every point, shoulder quarter and all; the handsomest head and largest eye of any here. She has ideal action, head and

* Abbas Pasha's Seglawieh is reported to have had two foals while in Egypt; one of them died, and the other was given to the late King of Italy, and left descendants, now in the possession of the present king.

tail carried to perfection, and recalls Beteyen ibn Mershid's mare, but her head is finer. She belongs to Hamúd, who is very proud of her, and tells us she came from the Jerba Shammar. It surprises us to find here a mare from Mesopotamia; but we are told that interchange of horses between the southern and northern Shammar is by no means rare."

"5. A dark brown Kehîlet Ajuz, no white except an inch in breadth just above one hoof, lovely head and thoroughbred appearance, and for style of galloping perhaps the best here, although less powerful than the Emir's chestnut and Hamúd's bay. It is hard to choose among the three."

"Of the eight horses, the best is a Shueyman Sbah of great power, head large and very fine. He reminds us of Faris Jerba's mare of the same strain of blood; they are probably related closely, for he has much the same points, forequarter perfect, hindquarter strong but less distinguished. He was bred, however, in Nejd."

"A grey Seglawi Jedran, from Ibn Nedéri of the Gomussa Ánazeh, is a poor specimen of that great strain of blood; but the Bedouin respect for it prevails here though they have now no pure Seglawi Jedrans in Nejd. It is interesting to find this horse valued here, as the fact proves that the Ánazeh horses are thought much of in Nejd. The more one sees of the Nejd horses here, the more is one convinced of the superiority of those of the Ánazeh in

the points of speed, and, proud as every one here is of the 'kheyl Nejdi,' it seems to be acknowledged that in these points they are surpassed by the Ánazeh horses."

"Our own Ánazeh mares are looked upon as prodigies of speed.

"In comparing what we see here, with what we saw last year in the north, the first thing that strikes us is that these are ponies, the others horses. It is not so much the actual difference in height, though there must be quite three inches on an average, as the shape, which produces this impression. The Nejd horses have as a rule shorter necks and shorter bodies, and stand over far less ground than the Ánazehs. Then, although their shoulders are undoubtedly good and their withers higher than one generally sees further north, the hind-quarter is short, and if it were not for the peculiarly handsome carriage of the tail would certainly want distinction. Their legs all seem to be extremely good; but we have not seen in one of them that splendid line of the hind leg to the hock which is so striking in the Ánazeh thoroughbreds. Of their feet it is difficult to judge, for from long standing without exercise, all the Emir's mares have their hoofs overgrown. Their manes and tails are thicker than one would expect.

"In their heads, however, there is certainly a general superiority to the Ánazeh mares, at least in all the points the Arabs most admire, and we we

both struck, directly we saw them, with the difference."

As I may fairly assume that few persons out of Arabia have an idea what are there considered the proper points of a horse's head, I will give here a description of them:

First of all, the head should be large, not small. A little head the Arabs particularly dislike, but the size should be all in the upper regions of the skull. There should be a great distance from the ears to the eyes, and a great distance from one eye to the other, though not from ear to ear. The forehead, moreover, and the whole region between and just below the eyes, should be convex, the eyes themselves standing rather "*à fleur de tête.*" But there should be nothing fleshy about their prominence, and each bone should be sharply edged; a flat forehead is disliked. The space round the eyes should be free of all hair, so as to show the black skin underneath, and this just round the eyes should be especially black and lustrous. The cheek-bone should be deep and lean, and the jaw-bone clearly marked. Then the face should narrow suddenly and run down almost to a point, not however to such a point as one sees in the English racehorse, whose profile seems to terminate with the nostril, but to the tip of the lip. The nostril when in repose should lie flat with the face, appearing in it little more than a slit, and pinched and puckered up, as also should the

mouth, which should have the under-lip longer than the upper, "like the camel's," the Bedouins say. The ears, especially in the mare, should be long, but fine and delicately cut, like the ears of a gazelle."

It must be remarked that the head and the tail are the two points especially regarded by Arabs in judging of a horse, as in them they think they can discover the surest signs of his breeding. The tails of the Nejd horses are as peculiar as their heads, and are as essential to their beauty. However other points might differ, every horse at Haïl had its tail set on in the same fashion, in repose something like the tail of a rocking horse, and not as has been described, "thrown out in a perfect arch." In motion the tail was held high in the air, and looked as if it could not under any circumstances be carried low. Mohammed ibn Aruk declared roundly that the phenomenon was an effect, partly at least, of art. He assured us that before a foal is an hour old, its tail is bent back over a stick and the twist produces a permanent result. But this sounds unlikely, and in any case it could hardly affect the carriage of the tail in galloping.

With regard to colour, of the hundred animals in the Haïl stables, there were about forty greys or rather whites, thirty bays, twenty chestnuts, and the rest brown. We did not see a real black, and of course there are no roans, or piebalds, or duns,

for these are not Arab colours. The Emir one day asked us what colours we preferred in England, and when we told him bay or chestnut he quite agreed with us. Nearly all Arabs prefer bay with black points, though pure white with a very black skin and hoofs is also liked. In a bay or chestnut, three white feet, the off fore-foot being dark, are not objected to. But, as a rule, colour is not much regarded at Haïl, for there as elsewhere in Arabia a fashionable strain is all in all.

"Besides the full grown animals, Ibn Rashid's yards contain thirty or forty foals and yearlings, beautiful little creatures but terribly starved and miserable. Foals bred in the desert are poor enough, but these in town have a positively sickly appearance. Tied all day long by the foot they seem to have quite lost heart, and show none of the playfulness of their age. Their tameness, like that of the "fowl and the brute," is shocking to see. The Emir tells us that every spring he sends a hundred yearlings down to Queyt on the Persian Gulf under charge of one of his slaves, who sells them at Bombay for £100 apiece. They are of course now at their worst age, but they have the prospect of a few months' grazing in the Nefûd before appearing in the market."

"On the whole, both of us are rather disappointed with what we see here. Of all the mares in the prince's stables I do not think more than three or four could show with advantage among the Go-

mussa, and, in fact, we are somewhat alarmed lest the Emir should propose an exchange with us for our chestnut Ras el-Fedawi which is greatly admired by every one. If he did, we could not well refuse."

With regard to Nejd horses in general, the following remarks are based on what we saw and heard at Haïl, and elsewhere in Arabia.

First, whatever may have been the case formerly, horses of any kind are now exceedingly rare in Nejd. One may travel vast distances in the Peninsula without meeting a single horse or even crossing a horse track. Both in the Nefûd and on our return journey to the Euphrates, we carefully examined every track of man and beast we met; but from the time of our leaving the Roala till close to Meshhed Ali, not twenty of these proved to be tracks of horses. The wind no doubt obliterates footsteps quickly, but it could not wholly do so, if there were a great number of the animals near. The Ketherin, a true Nejd tribe and a branch of the Beni Khaled, told us with some pride that they could mount a hundred horsemen, and even the Muteyr, reputed to be the greatest breeders of thoroughbred stock in Nejd, are said to possess only 400 mares. The horse is a luxury with the Bedouins of the Peninsula, and not, as it is with those of the North, a necessity of their daily life. Their journeys and raids and wars are all made on camel, not on horse-back; and at most the Sheykh mounts his mare at the

moment of battle. The want of water in Nejd is a sufficient reason for this. Horses there are kept for show rather than actual use, and are looked upon as far too precious to run unnecessary risks.

Secondly, what horses there are in Nejd, are bred in the Nefûds. The stony plateaux of the interior contain no suitable pasture except in a very few places, while the Nefûds afford grass, green or dry, the whole year round. The Muteyr, the Beni Khaled, the Dafir, and the Shammar, are now the principal breeders of horses in Nejd, but the Ánazeh are regarded as possessing the best strains, and the Ánazeh have disappeared from Nejd. They began to migrate northwards about two hundred years ago, and have ever since continued moving by successive migrations till all have abandoned their original homes. It may be that the great name which Nejd horses undoubtedly have in the East, was due mainly to these very Ánazeh, with whose horses they are now contrasted. The Bisshr Ánazeh were settled in the neighbourhood of Kheybar, on the western edge of the Nefûd, the Roala south of Jôf, and the Amarrat in the extreme east. These probably among them supplied Nejd horses in former times to Syria, Bagdad, and Persia, and some sections of the tribe may even have found their way further south; for the Ibn Saouds themselves are an Ánazeh family. So that then, probably, as now, the best strains of blood were

in their hands. To the present day in the north the Ánazeh distinguish the descendants of the mares brought with them from Nejd as "Nejdi," while they call the descendants of the mares captured from the tribes of the North, "Shimali" or Northerners.

The management and education of horses seems to differ little in Nejd from what it is elsewhere among the Arabs. But we were surprised to find that, in place of the Bedouin halter, the bit is used at Haïl. At first we fancied that this was in imitation of Turkish manners; but it is more likely to be an old custom with town Arabs. Indeed the Bedouins of the Sahara, no less than the Turks, use the ring bit, which may after all have been an invention of Arabia. Bad as it is for the mouth, it is certainly of use in the fancy riding indulged in at Haïl, the jerid play and sham fighting. Among the Bedouins of Nejd the halter alone is used.

Of anything like racing we could learn nothing. Trials of speed are no longer in fashion, as they must have been once, and skill in turning and doubling is alone of any value. That some tradition, however, of training still exists among the Arabs, the following recipe for rearing a colt seems to prove. It was given us in answer to our description of English racing and racehorses, and probably represents a traditional practice of Arabia as old as the days of Mahomet.

ARAB RECIPE FOR REARING A COLT.

"If," said our informant, "you would make a colt run faster than his fellows, remember the following rules:—

"'During the first month of his life let him be content with his mother's milk, it will be sufficient for him. Then during five months add to this natural supply goat's milk, as much as he will drink. For six months more give him the milk of camels, and besides a measure of wheat steeped in water for a quarter of an hour, and served in a nose-bag.

"'At a year old the colt will have done with milk; he must be fed on wheat and grass, the wheat dry from a nose-bag, the grass green if there is any.

"'At two years old he must work, or he will be worthless. Feed him now, like a full-grown horse, on barley; but in summer let him also have gruel daily at midday. Make the gruel thus:—Take a double-handful of flour, and mix it in water well with your hands till the water seems like milk; then strain it, leaving the dregs of the flour, and give what is liquid to the colt to drink.

"'Be careful from the hour he is born to let him stand in the sun; shade hurts horses, but let him have water in plenty when the day is hot.

"'The colt must now be mounted, and taken by his owner everywhere with him, so that he shall see



IBN-RASHID'S MARES.

[*Vol. II. p. 16.*

everything, and learn courage. He must be kept constantly in exercise, and never remain long at his manger. He should be taken on a journey, for work will fortify his limbs.

"'At three years old he should be trained to gallop. Then, if he be of true blood, he will not be left behind. Yalla!'"



HAMÚD IBN RASHID.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Babel was Nimrod's hunting box, and then
A town of gardens, walls, and wealth amazing,
Where Nabuchodonosor, king of men,
Reigned till one summer's day he took to grazing."
BYRON.

. . . . Oh how wretched
Is that poor man that lives on princes' favours."
SHAKESPEARE.

Mohammed loses his head—A ride with the Emir—The mountain fortress of Agde—Farewell to Haïl—We join the Persian Haj—Ways and manners of the pilgrims—A clergyman of Medina.

I HAVE hinted at a mystification in which we found ourselves involved a few days after our arrival at Haïl, and which at the time caused us no little anxiety. It had its origin in a piece of childishness on Mohammed's part, whose head was completely turned by the handsome reception given him as an Ibn Arûk by the Emir, and a little too, I fear, by our own spoiling. To the present day I am not quite sure that we heard all that happened, and so forbear entering upon the matter in detail; but as far as we could learn, Mohammed's vanity seems to have led him to aggrandise his own position in the eyes of Ibn Rashid's court, by representing us as persons whom he had taken under his protection, and who were in

some way dependent on him; boasting that the camels, horses, and other property were his own, and our servants his people. This under ordinary circumstances might have been a matter of small consequence, and we should not have grudged him a little self-glorification at our expense, conscious as we were of having owed the success of our journey hitherto, mainly to his fidelity. But unfortunately the secondary *rôle* which he would thus have assigned to us, made our relations with the Emir not only embarrassing, but positively dangerous. Our reception at first had been cordial to a degree that made it all the more annoying to find, that when we had been four days at Haïl, we no longer received the attentions which had hitherto been paid us. The presents of game ceased, and the lamb, with which we had hitherto been regaled at dinner, was replaced by camel meat. Instead of two soldiers being sent to escort us to the palace, a slave boy came with a message. On the fifth day we were not invited to the evening party, and on the sixth Wilfrid, calling at the palace, was told curtly that the Emir was not at home. We could not imagine the cause of this change, and Mohammed, usually so cheerful and so open-hearted, had become moody and embarrassed, keeping almost entirely with the servants in the outer house. Hanna, the faithful Hanna, began to hint darkly that things were not well, and Abdallah and the rest of the Mussulman servants seemed unwilling to do their duty. We remembered

that we were among Wahhabi fanatics, and we began to be very much alarmed. Still we were far from guessing the real reason, and it was not till we had been a week at Haïl that Wilfrid, happening to meet the Emir's chief slave Mubarek, learned from him how matters stood. It was no use being angry; indeed Mohammed's conduct was rather childish than disloyal, and the *dénouement* would have not been worth mentioning except as an illustration of Arab manners and ways of thought, and also as explaining why our stay at Haïl was cut shorter than we had originally intended it to be; and why, instead of going on to Kasim, we joined the Persian pilgrimage on their homeward road to Meshhed Ali.

Matters of course could not rest there, and on returning home from his interview with Mubarek, Wilfrid upbraided Mohammed with his folly, and then sent to the palace for Mufurraj, the master of ceremonies, and the same dignified old gentleman who had received us on our arrival, and having explained the circumstances bade him in his turn explain them to the Emir. The old man promised to do this, and I have no doubt kept his word, for that very evening we were sent for once more to the palace, and received with the old cordiality. It is, too, I think very creditable to the arrangements of the Haïl court, that no explanations of any sort were entered into. Mohammed, though put in his proper place, was still politely received; and only an increase of

amiable attentions made us remember that we had ever had cause to complain. As to Mohammed, I am bound to say, that once the fumes of his vanity evaporated, he bore no kind of malice for what we had been obliged to do, and became once more the amiable, attentive and serviceable friend he had hitherto been. Ill-temper is not an Arab failing. Still the incident was a lesson and a warning, a lesson that we were Europeans still among Asiatics, a warning that Haïl was a lion's den, though fortunately we were friends with the lion. We began to make our plans for moving on.

I have said little as yet about the Persian pilgrimage which, encamped just outside the walls of Haïl, had all along been a main feature in the goings on of the place. On a certain Tuesday, however, the Emir sent us a message that he expected us to come out riding with him, and that he would meet us at that gate of the town where the pilgrims were. It was a fortunate day for us, not indeed because we saw the pilgrims, but because we saw what we would have come the whole journey to see, and had almost despaired of seeing,—all the best of the Emir's horses out and galloping about. We were delighted at the opportunity, and made haste to get ready. In half an hour we were on our mares, and in the street. There was a great concourse of people all moving towards the camp, and just outside the town we found the Emir's cavalcade. This for the moment absorbed all my thoughts, for I had not yet seen

any of the Haïl horses mounted. The Emir, splendidly dressed but barefooted, was riding a pretty little white mare, while the chestnut Krushieh followed him mounted by a slave.

All our friends were there, Hamúd, Majid and the two boys his brothers, with a still smaller boy, whom they introduced to us as a son of Metaab, the late Emir, all in high spirits and anxious to show off their horses and their horsemanship; while next the Emir and under his special protection rode the youth with the tragical history, Naïf, the sole remaining son of Tellál, whose brothers Mohammed had killed, and who, it is whispered, will some day be called on to revenge their deaths. Mubarek too, the white slave, was there, a slave in name only, for he is strikingly like the princely family in feature and is one of the richest and most important personages in Haïl. The rest of the party consisted of friends and servants, with a fair sprinkling of black faces among them, dressed in their best clothes and mounted on the Emir's mares. Conspicuous on his beautiful bay was Hamúd, who, as usual, did us the honours, and pointed out and explained the various persons and things we saw. It was one of those mornings one only finds in Nejd. The air brilliant and sparkling to a degree one cannot imagine in Europe, and filling one with a sense of life such as one remembers to have had in childhood, and which gives one a wish to shout. The sky of an intense blue, and the

hills in front of us carved out of sapphire, and the plain, crisp and even as a billiard table, sloping gently upwards towards them. On one side the battlemented walls and towers of Haïl, with the palace rising out of a dark mass of palms almost black in the sunlight; on the other the pilgrim camp, a parti-coloured mass of tents, blue, green, red, white, with the pilgrims themselves in a dark crowd, watching with curious half-frightened eyes the barbaric display of which we formed a part.

Presently the Emir gave a signal to advance, and turning towards the south-west, our whole party moved on in the direction of a clump of palm-trees we could see about two miles off. Hamûd then suddenly put his mare into a gallop, and one after another the rest of the party joined him in a sham fight, galloping, doubling, and returning to the Emir, who remained alone with us, and shouting as though they would bring the sky about their ears. At last the Emir could resist it no longer, and seizing a jerid or palm stick from one of the slaves, went off himself among the others. In a moment his dignity and his town manners were forgotten, and he became the Bedouin again which he and all his family really are. His silk kefiyehs were thrown back, and bare-headed with his long Bedouin plaits streaming in the wind and bare-legged and bare-armed, he galloped hither and thither; charging into the throng, and pursuing and being pursued,

and shouting as if he had never felt a care, and never committed a crime in his life.

We found ourselves alone with a strange little personage whom we had already noticed riding beside the Emir, and who seemed even more out of place in this fantastic entertainment than ourselves. I hope at least that we looked less ridiculous than he did. Mounted on a sorry little kadish, and dressed in the fashion of European children fifty years ago, with a high waisted coat, well pleated at the skirt, trousers up to his knees, and feet shod with slippers, a little brown skull cap on his head, and a round shaven face, sat what seemed an overgrown boy, but what in reality was a chief person from among the Persian pilgrims. It was Ali Koli Khan, son of the great Khan of the Bactiari, who for his father's sake was being treated by the Emir with all possible honour. He, with the rest of the Haj, was now on his way back from Mecca, and it was partly to impress him with the Emir's magnificence that the present party had been arranged.

We did not long stay alone, for in a few minutes the galloping ceased, and we then went on sedately as before, and in due time arrived at the palm trees, which, it turned out, were the Emir's property, and contained in a garden surrounded by a high wall. Here we were invited to dismount, and a carpet having been spread under the trees, we all sat down. Slaves were soon busy serving a luncheon of sweetmeats,—boys were made to climb the lemon trees,

and shake down the fruit, and coffee was handed round. Then all the party said their prayers except ourselves and the Persian, who, as a Shiah, could not join in their devotions, and we mounted again and rode home. This time we too joined in the galloping, which speedily recommenced, our mares fully enjoying the fun, and in this way we scampered back to Haïl.

On the following day Wilfrid called on Ali Koli Khan in his tent, going there with Mohammed, now once more a reasonable companion and follower. Indeed in the Persian camp assumptions of nobility on Mohammed's part would have been quite thrown away, for the Persians care nothing for Arabian nobility, and treat all alike as Bedouins and barbarians. Ali Koli, though only a younger son, was travelling in state, having his mother with him, and a multitude of servants, male and female, besides his *hemeldaria* or contractor, and the Arabs managing his beasts. His major-domo and interpreter was a magnificent personage, and his followers, dressed in felt tunics and skull caps, gave him the appearance of being an important chief. His tent was of the Turkish pattern, well lined and comfortable, with fine Persian carpets on the floor, and a divan. There Wilfrid found him sitting with a friend, Abd er-Rahim, the son of a merchant of Kermanshah, who is also British consular agent there. The young Persians were very amiable; but the contrast of their manners with those of the ceremonious Arabs

struck Wilfrid at once. There were none of those elaborate compliments and polite inquiries one gets used to at Haïl, but rather a European *sans gêne* in the form of reception. They made Wilfrid comfortable on the divan, called for tea, which was served in a *samovar*, and at once poured out a long history of their sufferings on the pilgrimage. This they did in very broken Arabic, and with an accent irresistibly absurd, for the Persians speak with a drawl in their intonation, wholly foreign to that of the Arabs. Ali's natural language, he says, is Kurdish, but being an educated person, and an officer in the Shah's army, he talks Persian equally well. In Persia, Arabic plays much the part in education which Latin did in Europe before it was quite a dead language. Both he and Abd er-Rahim were loud in complaints of everything Arabian, and in spite of Mohammed's presence, abused roundly the whole Arab race, the poverty of the towns, the ignorance of the citizens, and the robberies of the Bedouins, also the extortionate charges of the Arab hemeldarias, contractors for camels, and the miseries of desert travelling. "Was ever anything seen so miserable as the bazaar at Haïl; not a bag of sweetmeats to be had for love or money, the Arabs were mere barbarians, drinkers of coffee instead of tea." Every now and then, too, they would break out into conversation in their own language. Wilfrid, however, liked Ali Koli, and they parted very good friends, with an invitation from both the young

Persians to travel on with them to Meshhed on the Euphrates, where the Persians always end their pilgrimage by a visit to the shrines of Ali and Huseyn. This seemed an excellent opportunity, and having consulted the Emir, who highly approved of the plan, we accordingly decided to travel with the Haj as soon as it should start.

Our last days at Haïl were by no means the least pleasant. As a final proof of his goodwill and confidence, the Emir announced that we might pay a visit to Agde, a fortress in the mountains some miles from Haïl, and which he had never before shown to any stranger. I do not feel at liberty to say exactly where this is, for we were sent to see it rather on parole, and though I hope Ibn Rashid runs no danger of foreign invasion, I would not give a clue to possible enemies. Suffice it to say that it lies in the mountains, in a position of great natural strength, made stronger by some rude attempts at fortification, and that it is really one of the most curious places in the world.

One approaches it from the plain by a narrow winding valley, reminding one not a little of the wadys of Mount Sinai, where the granite rocks rise abruptly on either hand out of a pure bed of sand. On one of these is engraved an inscription in Arabic which we copied and which though not very legible may be read thus:—

"Hadihi kharâbat Senhârîb."

"This (is) the ruin of Senacherib ('s building)."

Such at least is its meaning in the opinion of Mr. Sabunji, a competent Arabic scholar, though I will not venture to explain on what occasion Senacherib made his way to Nejd, nor why he wrote in Arabic instead of his own cuneiform.

Inside the defences, the valley broadens out into an amphitheatre formed by the junction of three or four wadys in which there is a village and a palm garden. Besides which, the wadys are filled with wild palms watered, the Arabs say, "min Allah," by Providence, at least by no human hand. They are very beautiful, forming a brilliant contrast of green fertility with the naked granite crags which overhang them on all sides. These are perhaps a thousand feet in height, and run down sheer into the sandy floor of the wadys, so that one is reminded in looking at them of that valley of diamonds where the serpents lived, and down which the merchants threw their pieces of meat for the rocs to gather, in the tale of Sinbad the Sailor. No serpents however live in Agde, but a population of very honest Shammar, who entertained us with a prodigality of dates and coffee, difficult to do justice to. We had been sent in the company of two horsemen of the Emir's, Shammar, who did the honours, as Agde and all in it are really Ibn Rashid's private property. These and the villagers gave us a deal of information about the hills we were in, and showed us where a great battle had been fought by Mohammed's father and his uncle Obeyd against

the Ibn Ali, formerly Emirs of the Jebel. It would seem that Agde was the oldest possession of the Ibn Rashids, and that on their taking Haïl the Ibn Alis marched against them, when they retreated to their fortress, and there gave battle and such a defeat to the people of Kefar that it secured to the Ibn Rashids supreme power ever after. They also showed us with great pride a wall built by Obeyd to block the narrow valley, and made us look at everything, wells, gardens, and houses, so that we spent nearly all the day there. They told us too of a mysterious beast that comes from the hills by night and climbs the palm trees for sake of the dates. "As large as a hare, with a long tail, and very good to eat." They describe it as sitting on its hind-legs, and whistling, so that Wilfrid thinks it must be a marmot. Only, do marmots climb? They call it the Webber.

We had a delightful gallop home with the two Bedouins, (Mohammed was not with us,) of whom we learned one of the Shammar war songs, which runs thus :—

"Ma arîd ana erkobu delul,
Lau zeynuli shedadeha,
Arîdu ana hamra shenuf,
Hamra seryeh aruddeha."

thus literally translated :—

"I would not ride a mere delul,
Though lovely to me her shedad (camel-saddle);
Let me be mounted on a mare,
A bay mare, swift and quick to turn."

They were mounted on very pretty ponies, but could not keep up with us galloping. If we had been in Turkey, or indeed anywhere else but in Arabia, we should have had to give a handsome tip after an expedition of this kind; but at Haïl nothing of the sort was expected. Both these Shammar were exceedingly intelligent well mannered men, with souls above money. They were doing their duty to the prince as Sheykh, and to us as strangers, and they did it enthusiastically.

The level of Agde is 3,780 feet above the sea, that of Haïl 3,500.

This was, perhaps, the pleasantest day of all those we spent at Haïl, and will live long with us as a delightful remembrance. On the following day we were to depart. Mohammed, while we were away, had been making preparations. Two new camels had been bought, and a month's provision of dates and rice purchased, in addition to a gift of excellent Yemen coffee sent us by the Emir. Our last interview with Ibn Rashid was characteristic. He was not at the kasr, but in a house he has close to the Mecca gate, where from a little window he can watch unperceived the goings on of the Haj encamped below him. We found him all alone, for he has lost all fear of our being assassins now, at his window like a bird of prey, calculating no doubt how many more silver pieces he should be able to make out of the Persians before they were well out of his clutches. Every now and then he

would lean out of the window, which was partly covered by a shutter, and shout to one of his men who were standing below some message with regard to the pilgrims. He seemed to be enjoying the pleasure of his power over them, and it is absolute.

To us he was very amiable, renewing all his protestations of friendship and regard, and offering to give us anything we might choose to ask for, dromedaries for the journey, or one of his mares. This, although we should have liked to accept the last offer, we of course declined, Wilfrid making a short speech in the Arab manner, saying that the only thing we asked was the Emir's regard, and wishing him length of days. He begged Mohammed ibn Rashid to consider him as his vakil in Europe in case he required assistance of any kind, and thanked him for all the kindness we had received at his hands. The Emir then proposed that we should put off our departure, and go with him instead on a ghazú or warlike expedition he was starting on in a few days, a very attractive offer which might have been difficult to refuse had it been made earlier, but which we now declined. Our heads, in fact, had been in the jaws of the lion long enough, and now our only object was to get quietly and decorously out of the den. We therefore pleaded want of time, and added that our camels were already on the road; we then said good-bye and took our leave.

There was, however, one more visit to be paid, this time of friendly regard more than of ceremony. As we rode through the town we stopped at Hamúd's house and found him and all his family at home. To them our farewells were really expressions of regret at parting, and Hamúd gave us some very sound advice about going on with the Haj to Meshhed Ali, instead of trying to get across to Bussora. There had been rain, he said, on the pilgrim road, and all the reservoirs (those marked on the map as the tanks of Zobeydeh) were full, so that our journey that way would be exceptionally easy, whereas between this and Bussorah, we should have to pass over an almost waterless region, without anything interesting to compensate for the difficulty. But this we should see as we went on—the first thing, as I have said, was to get clear away, and it would be time enough later to settle details about our course.

Majid was there, and received from Wilfrid as a remembrance a silver-handled Spanish knife, whereupon he sent for a black cloth cloak with a little gold embroidery on the collar and presented it to me. It was a suitable gift, for I had nothing of the sort, indeed no respectable abba at all, and this one was both dignified and quiet in appearance. Majid at least, I am sure, regrets us, and if circumstances ever take us again to Haïl, it would be the best fortune for us to find him or his father on the throne. They are regarded as the natural heirs to

the Sheykhat, and Ibn Rashid's does not look like a long life.

After this we mounted, and in another five minutes were clear of the town. Then looking back, we each drew a long breath, for Haïl with all the charm of its strangeness, and its interesting inhabitants, had come to be like a prison to us, and at one time when we had had that quarrel with Mohammed, had seemed very like a tomb.

We left Haïl by the same gate at which we had entered it, what seemed like years before, but instead of turning towards the mountains, we skirted the wall of the town and further on the palm gardens, which are its continuation, for about three miles down a ravine-like wady. Then we came out on the plain again, and at the last isolated group of ithel trees, halted for the last time to enjoy the shade, for the sun was almost hot, before joining the pilgrim caravan, which we could see like a long line of ants traversing the plain between us and the main range of Jebel Shammar.

It was, without exception, the most beautiful view I ever saw in my life, and I will try to describe it. To begin with, it must be understood that the air, always clear in Jebel Shammar, was this day of a transparent clearness, which probably surpasses anything seen in ordinary deserts, or in the high regions of the Alps, or at the North Pole, or anywhere except perhaps in the moon. For this is the very centre of the desert, four

hundred miles from the sea, and nearly four thousand feet above the sea level. Before us lay a foreground of coarse reddish sand, the washing down of the granite rocks of Jebel Aja, with here and there magnificent clumps of ithel, great pollards whose trunks measure twenty and thirty feet* in circumference, growing on little mounds showing where houses once stood—just as in Sussex the yew trees do—for the town seems to have shifted from this end of the oasis to where it now is. Across this sand lay a long green belt of barley, perhaps a couple of acres in extent, the blades of corn brilliantly green, and just having shot up high enough to hide the irrigation furrows. Beyond this, for a mile or more, the level desert fading from red to orange, till it was again cut by what appeared to be a shining sheet of water reflecting the deep blue of the sky—a mirage of course, but the most perfect illusion that can be imagined. Crossing this, and apparently wading in the water, was the long line of the pilgrim camels, each reflected exactly in the mirage below him with the dots of blue, red, green, or pink, representing the litter or tent he carried. The line of the procession might be five miles or more in length; we could not see the end of it. Beyond again rose the confused fantastic mass of the sapphire coloured crags of Jebel Aja, the most strange and beautiful

* We measured one, a pollard, thirty-six feet round the trunk at five feet from the ground.

mountain range that can be imagined —a lovely vision.

When we had sufficiently admired all this, and I had made my sketch of it, for there was no hurry, we got on our mares again and rejoicing with them in our freedom, galloped on singing the Shammar song, "Ma arid ana erkobu delúl lau zeynoli shedadeha, biddi ana hamra shenûf, hamra seriyeh arruddeha," a proceeding which inspired them more than any whip or spur could have done, and which as we converged towards the Haj caravan, made the camels caper, and startled the pilgrims into the idea that the Harb Bedouins were once more upon them. So we went along with Mohammed following us, till we reached the vanguard of the Haj, and the green and red banner which goes in front of it. Close to this we found our own camels, and soon after camped with them, not ten miles from Haïl in a bit of a wady where the standard was planted.

Our tents are a couple of hundred yards away from the Haj camp, which is crowded together for fear of the dangers of the desert. The pilgrim mueddins have just chanted the evening call to prayers, and the people are at their devotions. Our mares are munching their barley, and our hawk (a trained bird we bought yesterday for six mejidies of a Bedouin at Haïl), is sitting looking very wise on his perch in front of us. It is a cold evening, but oh how clean and comfortable in the tent!

February 2.—It appears after all that only about half the Haj left Haïl yesterday. There has been a difficulty about camels some say, others that Ibn Rashid will not let the people go, an affair of money probably in either case. So we had hardly gone more than two miles before a halt was ordered by the emir el-haj, one Ambar, a black slave of Ibn Rashid's, and the camels and their riders remained massed together on a piece of rising ground for the purpose we think of being counted. The dervishes, however, and other pilgrims on foot went on as they liked, and so did we, for we do not consider ourselves bound by any of the rules of the Haj procession, and Abdallah has orders to march our camels well outside the main body. There was no road or track at all to-day, and we went forward on the look-out for water which we heard was somewhere on ahead, crossing some very rough ground and wadys which were almost ravines. We have become so used to the desert now, that from a long distance we made out the water, guessing its position from the white colour of the ground near it. The whiteness is caused by a stonelike deposit the water makes when it stands long anywhere; and in this instance it lay in a sort of natural reservoir or series of reservoirs in the bed of a shallow wady. These must have been filled some time during the winter by rain, and we hurried on to fill our goat skins at them while they were still clean, for the pilgrims would soon drink up and

pollute them. They are but small pools. We found Awwad already there, he having been sent on in front with a delúl to make sure of our supply, and the process of filling the skins was hardly over before the dervishes who always march ahead of the Haj began to arrive. They have an unpleasant habit of washing in the water first, and drinking it afterwards, which we are told is part of their religious ritual.

The wind has been very violent all day with a good deal of sand in it, but it has now gone down. Our course since leaving Haïl has been east by north, and is directed towards a tall hill, Jebel Jildiyeh, which is a very conspicuous landmark. Our camp to-night is a pleasanter one than yesterday's, being further from the pilgrims, and we have a little wady all to ourselves, with plenty of good firewood, and food for the camels.

February 3.—Though fires were lit this morning at four o'clock as if in preparation of an early start, no move has been made to-day. Half the pilgrimage they tell us is still at Haïl, and must be waited for. Wilfrid went to-day into the camp to find our friend Ali Koli Khan, but neither he nor Abd er-Rahim, nor anyone else he knew had arrived.

The Persian pilgrims, though not very agreeable in person or in habits (for they are without the sense of propriety which is so characteristic of the Arabs), are friendly enough, and if we could talk to them, would, I dare say, be interesting, but on a superficial

comparison with the Arabs they seem coarse and boorish. They are most of them fair complexioned, and many have fair hair and blue eyes; but their features are heavy, and there is much the same difference between them and the Shammar who are escorting them, as there is between a Dutch cart-horse and one of Ibn Rashid's mares. In spite of their washings, which are performed in season and out of season all day long, they look unutterably dirty in their greasy felt dresses, as no unwashed Arab ever did. Awwad and the rest of our people now and then get into disputes with them when they come too near our tents in search of firewood, and it is evident that there is no love lost between Persian and Arab.

My day has been spent profitably at home re-stuffing my saddle, which was sadly in want of it. Mohammed has become quite himself again, no airs or graces of any kind, and, as he says, the air of Haïl did not agree with him. He seems anxious now to efface all recollection of the past, and has made himself very agreeable, telling us histories connected with the Sebaa and their horses, all of them instructive, some amusing.

February 4.—Another day's waiting, the pilgrims as well as we ourselves impatient, but impatience is no good. Wilfrid, by way of occupying the time, went off on a surveying expedition by himself, with his mare and the greyhounds. He went in a straight line northwards, towards a line of low hills which

are visible here from the high ground. They are about twelve miles off. He met nobody except a couple of Bedouins on delûls, going to Atwa, where they told him there is a well. They looked on him and his gun with suspicion, and did not much like being cross-questioned. After that he found the desert absolutely empty of life, a succession of level sandy plains, and rough ridges of sandstone. The hills themselves, which he reached before turning back, were also of yellow sandstone, weathered black in patches, and from the top of the ridge he could make out the Nefûd, like a red sea. He galloped to the ridge and back in three hours. The ride was useful, as it enabled him to get the position of several of the principal hills, Yatubb, Jildiyeh, and others, and to mark them on his chart. He did not say where he intended to go, but as it happened, he returned before there was time for me to become anxious.

In the meanwhile, Awwad and Abdallah had been giving the falcon a lesson with a lure they have made out of one of the nosebags. The bird seems very tame, and comes to Awwad when he calls it, shouting "Ash'o, ash'o," which he explains is the short for its name, Rasham, a corruption of the word *rashmon*, which means shining like lightning. We may hope now with Rasham's assistance to keep ourselves supplied with meat, for hares are in plenty.

In the afternoon visitors came, some Shammar Bedouins of the Ibn Duala family, who have

preferred to camp beside us, as more congenial neighbours to them than the Persians. They are on their way from Haïl to their tents in the Nefûd with a message from the Emir that more camels are wanted; and they are going on afterwards with the Haj as far as Meshhed Ali, or perhaps to Samawa on the Euphrates, to buy rice (tummin), and wheat. It is only twice a year that the tribes of Jebel Shammar can communicate with the outside world; on the occasion of the two Haj journeys, coming and going. It is then that they lay in their provision for the year. The eldest of these Ibn Duala, a man of sixty, is very well-mannered and amiable. He dined with Mohammed and the servants in their tent, and came to sit with us afterwards in ours. We are in half a mind to leave this dawdling Haj, and go on with him to-morrow. But his tents lie some way to the left out of our road.

Besides the Ibn Dualas, there are some poor Bedouins with their camels crouched down in our wady to be out of sight. They are afraid of being impressed for the Haj, and at first it was difficult to understand why, if so, they should have come so close to it. But they explained that they hoped to get lost in the crowd, and hoped to have the advantage of its company, without having their camels loaded. They, like everybody else, are on their way to Meshhed to buy corn.

There is a report that the Emir is coming from Haïl to-morrow, and will travel three days with the

pilgrimage, going on afterwards, nobody knows where, on a ghazú. This would be tiresome, as now we have wished him good-bye we only want to get away.

February 5.—We have moved at last, but only another ten miles, to a larger wady, which seems to drain the whole country, and which they call Wady Hanasser (the valley of the little fingers), why so called I cannot say. Here there are numerous wells, and a large tract of camel pasture, of the sort called *rimh*. There are a good number of hares in this cover, and we have had some coursing with our greyhounds, aided by a sort of lurcher who has attached himself to us. The servants call him "Merzug," which may be translated a "windfall" literally a gift from God, an unattractive animal, but possessed of a nose.

Two hours after starting we came to a curious tell standing quite alone in the plain. It is, like all the rest of the country now, of sandstone, and we were delighted to find it covered with inscriptions,*

* Mr. Rassam, who has been digging at Babylon, informs me that these inscriptions are in the ancient Phœnician character. It would seem that the Phœnicians, who were a nation of shopkeepers, were in the habit of sending out commercial travellers with samples of goods all over Asia; and wherever they stopped on the road, if there was a convenient bit of soft rock, they scratched their names on it, and drew pictures of animals. The explanation may be the true one, but how does it come that these tradesmen should choose purely desert subjects for their artistic efforts—camels, ostriches, ibexes, and horsemen with lances. I should have fancied rather that these were the work of Arabs, or of whoever

and pictures of birds and beasts of the sort we had already seen, but much better executed, and on a larger scale. The character, whatever its name, is a very handsome one, as distinct and symmetrical as the Greek or Latin capitals, and some of the drawings have a rude, but real artistic merit. They cannot be the work of mere barbarians, any more than the alphabet. It is remarkable that all the animals represented are essentially Arabian, the gazelle, the camel, the ibex, the ostrich. I noticed also a palm tree conventionally treated, but nothing like a house, or even a tent. The principal subject is a composition of two camels with necks crossed, of no small merit. It is combined with an inscription very regularly cut. That these things are very ancient is proved by the colour of the indentations. The rock is a reddish sandstone weathered black, and it is evident that when fresh, the letters and drawings stood out red against a dark back-ground, but now many of these have been completely weathered over again, a process it must have taken centuries in this dry climate to effect.

We were in front of the Haj when we came to this tell (Tell es Sayliyeh), and we waited on the top of it while the whole procession passed us, an hour or more. It was a curious spectacle. From the height where we were, we could see for thirty or forty miles back over the plain, as far as Jebel Aja,

represented the Arabs, in days gone by, anyhow of people living in the country. But I am no archæologist.

at the foot of which Haïl lies. The procession, three miles long, was composed of some four thousand camels (nor was this the whole Haj), with a great number of men on foot besides. In front were the dervishes, walking very fast, almost running; wild dirty people, but amiable, and quite ready to converse if they know Arabic; then, a group of respectably dressed people walking out of piety, a man with an immense blue turban, we believe to be an Afghan; a slim, very neat-looking youth, who might be a clerk or a shopkeeper's assistant, reading as he walks a scroll, and others carrying leather bottles in their hands containing water for their ablutions, which they stop every now and then to perform. Sometimes they chant or recite prayers. All these devotees are very rude to us, answering nothing when we salute them, and being thrown into consternation if the greyhounds come near them lest they should be touched by them and defiled. One of them, the youth with the scroll, stopped this morning at our fire to warm his hands as he went by, and we offered him a cup of coffee, but he said he had breakfasted, and turned to talk to the servants, his fellow Mussulmans, but the servants told him to move on. Among Arabs, to refuse a cup of coffee is the grossest offence, and is almost tantamount to a declaration of war. The Arabs do not understand the religious prejudices of the Shiyite Persians.

Some way behind these forerunners comes the *berak*,

or banner, carried in the centre of a group of mounted dromedaries magnificently caparisoned and moving on at a fast walk. These most beautiful creatures have coats like satin, eyes like those of the gazelle, and a certain graceful action which baffles description. Not even the Arabian horse has such a look of breeding as these thorough-bred camels. They are called *naamiyeh*, because one may go to sleep while riding them without being disturbed by the least jolting.

The berak, Ibn Rashid's standard, is a square of purple silk with a device and motto in white in the centre, and a green border. It is carried by a servant on a tall dromedary, and is usually partly furled on the march. Ambar, the negro emir el-Haj, generally accompanies this group. He has a little white mare led by a slave which follows him, and which we have not yet seen him ride.

After the berak comes the mass of pilgrims, mounted sometimes two on one camel, sometimes with a couple of boxes on each side, the household furniture. The camels are the property of Bedouins, mostly Shammar, but many of them Dafir, Sherârat, or Howeysin. They follow their animals on foot, and are at perpetual wrangle with the pilgrims, although, if they come to blows, Ibn Rashid's police mounted on dromedaries interfere, deciding the quarrel in a summary manner.

A Persian riding on a camel is the most ridiculous sight in the world. He insists on

sitting astride, and seems absolutely unable to learn the ways and habits of the creature he rides; and he talks to it with his falsetto voice in a language no Arabian camel could possibly understand. The jokes cut on the Persians by the Arabs never cease from morning till night. The better class of pilgrims, and of course all the women except the very poor, travel in *mahmals* or litters—panniers, of which a camel carries two—covered over like a tradesman's van with blue or red canvas. One or two persons possess *tahteravans*, a more expensive kind of conveyance, which requires two mules or two camels, one before and one behind, to carry it. In either of these litters the traveller can squat or even lie down and sleep. The camels chosen for the mahmals are strong and even-paced; and some of these double panniers are fitted up with a certain care and elegance, and the luxuries of Persian rugs and hangings. A confidential driver leads the camel, and servants sometimes walk beside it. One of the pilgrims keeps a man to march in front with his narghileh, which he smokes through a very long tube sitting in the pannier above. There are a few horses, perhaps about half a dozen. One, a white Kehîlan Harkan, was bought the other day by a rich pilgrim from a Shammar Bedouin of the escort. This horse seems to be thoroughbred as far as can be judged from his head, tail, and pasterns; the rest of him is hidden by a huge *pallan*, or pack-saddle, with trappings, in which his new

owner rides him. I have seen no others worth mentioning.

The whole of this procession defiled before us as we sat perched on the Tell es Sayliyeh just above their heads.

We have made some new acquaintances, Hejazis from Medina, who came to our tent to-day and sat down in a friendly way to drink coffee with us. The Hejazi, though accounted pure Arabs, are almost as black as negroes, and have mean squat features, very unlike those of the Shammar and other pure races we have seen. They are also wanting in dignity, and have a sort of Gascon reputation in this part of Arabia. These were extremely outspoken people. The chief man among them, one Saleh ibn Benji, is keeper of the grand mosque at Medina, and is now travelling to collect alms in Persia for the shrine. He told us that although quite willing to make friends with us here and drink our coffee, he could not advise us to go to Medina. Not but what Englishmen as Englishmen were in good repute there; but it was against their rule to allow any except Mussulmans inside the town. If we came as Mussulmans it would be all very well, but as Nasrani it would not do. He himself would be the first to try and compass our deaths. They had found a Jew in Medina last year and executed him; and the people were very angry because the Sultan had sent a Frank engineer to survey the district, and had given out that he was



THE MECCAN PILGRIMAGE LEAVING HAIL.

[*Vol. II., p. 46.*

a Moslem. The rule only applied to the two holy cities, Mecca and Medina, not to the rest of the country. The Mussulman subjects of the Queen who came from India were (even though Shias) always well received; so should we be if we conformed to Islam. The Persians, though tolerated by the Hejazi, were disliked as Persians as well as heretics, and often got beaten in Medina. He (Saleh) was going to collect money from them, as they were fools enough to give it him, but he did not care for their company. He would sooner travel with us. We might all go together on this tour through Persia. One thing he could not understand about the English Government, and that was, what earthly interest they had in interfering with the slave trade. We said it was to prevent cruelty. But there was no cruelty in it, he insisted. "Who ever saw a negro ill-treated?" he asked. We could not say that we had ever done so in Arabia; and, indeed, it is notorious that with the Arabs the slaves are like spoiled children rather than servants. We had to explain that in other countries slaves were badly used; but as Saleh remained unconvinced, we could only wind up with a general remark, that this interference with the slave trade was a "shoghl hukm," a matter concerning the Government, and no affair of ours. He seemed pretty well informed of what was going on in the world, having heard of the Russian war, though not the full circumstances of its termination; and of the cession of Cyprus, as to

which he remarked, that the English Queen has been given Kubros as a bakshish by the Sultan. His last words were, "Plain speaking is best. I am your friend here; but, remember, not in Medina, on account of religion."



EDIBLE LOCUST.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Come, Myrrha, let us go on to the Euphrates."—BYRON.

We go in search of adventures—Taybetism—An hyæna hunt—How to cook locusts—Hawking—The reservoirs of Zobeydeh—Tales and legends—A *coup de théâtre*—Mohammed composes a kasîd.

February 6.—We are tired of loitering with the Haj, and besides, do not care to see more of Ibn Rashid, who is expected to-day. It is always a good rule not to outstay your welcome, and to go when you have once said good-bye. So, finding no indication of a move in the pilgrim camp this morning, we decided on marching without them. We have not gone far; indeed, from the high ground where we are camped we can see the smoke of the camp rising up at the edge of the plain. There is capital pasture here; and we have a fine wide prospect to the south and west; Jebel Jildiyeh being now due south of us, and Jebel Aja west by south, Haïl perhaps forty miles off; to the north the Nefûd, and behind us to the east from the ridge above our camp, we can look over a subbkha six or seven miles distant, with the oasis of Bekaa or Taybetism (happy be its name) round its shores. The place had always been called Bekaa, we are told, till a few years ago, when the name was

thought unlucky, and changed, though I cannot quite understand why, for the word means a place where water can collect.

We flew our falcon to-day, and, after one or two disappointments, it caught us a hare. The wadys are full of hares, but the dogs cannot see them in the high bushes, and this was the only one started in the open. We have encamped early, and are enjoying the solitude. The moon will be full to-night; and it is provoking to think how much of its light has been wasted by delay. The moon is of little use for travelling after it is full.

February 7.—Though we did not move our camp to-day, we had a long ride, and got as far as the village of Taybetism, which is worth seeing. It is a very curious place, resembling Jobba as far as situation goes. Indeed, it seems probable that most of the towns of Nejd have in common this feature, that they are placed in hollows towards which the water drains, as it is in such positions that wells can be dug without much labour. Like Jobba, Taybetism has a subbkha, but the latter is altogether a more important oasis, for the palm-gardens reach nearly round the lake, and though not quite continuous, they must have an extent of four or five miles. The houses seem to be scattered in groups all along this length, and there is no special town.*

* It was to Taybetism that Abdallah ibn Saoud fled ten years ago when he was driven by his brother out of Aared, and from it that he sent that treacherous message to Midhat Pasha at Bagdad which brought the Turks into Hasa and broke up the Wahhabi Empire.

The geology of the district is most interesting. At the edge of the subbkha the sandstone rocks form strange fantastic cliffs, none more than fifty feet high, but most fanciful in form. Some, shaped like mushrooms, show that the subbkha must at one time have been an important lake, instead of the dry semblance of a lake it now is. We measured the largest of these, and found it was forty feet in length by twenty-five in width at top, with a stalk of only five feet, the whole mass resting on a high pedestal. Other rocks looked as though they had been suddenly cooled while boiling and red hot, with the bubbles petrified as they stood. There were broad sheets of rose-coloured stone like strawberry cream with more cream poured into it and not yet mixed, streaked pink and white. Here and there, there were patches of Nefûd sand with the green Nefûd adr growing on them, and clusters of wild palms and tamarisks with a pool or two of bitter water. The subbkha, although quite dry, looked like a lake, so perfect was the mirage, of clear blue water without a ripple, reflecting the palms and houses on the opposite shore. We went round to some of these, and found beautiful gardens and well-to-do farms with patches of green barley growing outside. These were watered from wells about forty-five feet deep, good water, which the people drew for our mares to drink. We passed, but did not go into a large square kasr belonging to Ibn Rashid, where a dozen or so of dervishes

from the Haj were loafing about. They asked us for news—whether the Emir had come, and whether the Haj was still waiting. These were most of them not Persian dervishes, though Shias, but from Bagdad and Meshhed Ali, people of Arab race.

On our way back we crossed a party of Shammar Bedouins, with their camels come for water from the Nefûd, which is close by. They gave us some lebben to drink, the first we have tasted this year. There were women with them. We also met a man alone on a very thin delúl. Mohammed made some rather uncomplimentary remarks about this animal, whereupon the owner in great scorn explained that she was a Bint Udeyhan, the very best breed of dromedaries in Arabia, and that if Mohammed should offer him a hundred pounds he would not sell her, that she was the camel always sent by Ibn Rashid on messages which wanted speed. He then trotted off at a pace which, though it appeared nothing remarkable, soon took him out of sight.

Awwad and Ibrahim Kasir have been back to the Haj camp for water, and have brought news that the Emir has actually arrived, and a message from him, that if we go on to the wells of Shaybeh he will meet us there.

February 8.—We have marched fifteen miles to-day from point to point, making a circuit round Taybetism and are now encamped at the top of the Nefûd. A Shammar boy of the name of Izzar with three delúls came back from the Haj camp yester-

day with Awwad, and he undertakes to show us the way if we want to go on in front. He would sooner travel with us than with the Haj, as his beasts are thin, and he is afraid of their being impressed for the pilgrims. He wants to drive them unloaded to Meshhed, so that they may grow fat on the way, and then load them for the home voyage with wheat. He talks about six or seven days to Meshhed; but Wilfrid insists that we are not twenty miles nearer Meshhed than when we left Haïl, as we have been travelling almost due east, instead of nearly due north, and there must be four hundred miles more to go. This should take us twenty days at least. But the servants will not believe. We shall see who is right. They and Mohammed are very unwilling to go on before the Haj, but now that we have got this boy Izzar we are determined not to wait. If we delay we shall run short of provisions, which would be worse than anything. Already, Awwad says, the pilgrims are complaining loudly that they shall starve if they are kept longer waiting in this way. They have brought provisions for so many days and no more, and there is no place now where they can revictual. "The Haj," added Awwad, "is sitting by the fire, very angry."

Our march to-day was enlivened by some hunting, though with no good result. Sayad and Shiekha coursed a herd of gazelles, and succeeded in turning them, but could not get hold of any, though one passed close to Mohammed, who fired without effect.

They made off straight for the Nefûd. The falcon was flown at a houbara (frilled bustard), but the bustard beat him off, as he is only a last year's bird, and not entered to anything but hares. Rasham, however, is an amusement to us and sits on his perch at our tent door. This spot is pleasant and lonely, within a hundred yards of the edge of the Nefûd.

February 9.—Having sent Izzar to a high point for a last look back for the Haj and in vain, we have given them up and now mean to march straight on without them. It is however annoying that we are still going east instead of north, coasting the Nefûd I suppose to get round instead of crossing it; but we dare not plunge into it against Izzar's positive assurance that the other is the only way. Soil sprinkled with *jabsin* (talc), and in places with the fruit of the wild poisonous melon. Passed the well of Beyud (eggs) thirty feet deep. and travelled six and a half hours, perhaps eighteen miles, to our present camp absolutely without incident. Looking at the stars to-night, Mohammed tells me they call Orion's belt "mizan" (the balance), and the pole star "el jiddeh" (the kid). We now have milk every day from Izzar's she-camel, a great luxury.

February 10.—At eight o'clock we reached the wells of Shaybeh. There are forty of them close together in the middle of a great bare space, with some hills of white sand to the north of them. The

wind was blowing violently, drifting the sand, and the place looked as inhospitable a one as could well be imagined, a good excuse for over-ruling all notions of stopping there, "to wait for the Emir."

Shaybeh stands on the old Haj road which passes east of Haïl, making straight for Bereydeh in Kasîm, and the reason of our travelling so far east is thus explained. Now we have turned at right angles northwards, and there is a well-defined track which it will be easy enough for us to follow, even if we lose our Shammar guide. After leaving the wells, we travelled for some miles between ridges of white sand, which the wind was shaping "like the snow wreaths in the high Alps." The white sand, I noticed, is always of a finer texture than the red, and is more easily affected by the wind. It carries, moreover, very little vegetation, so that the mounds and ridges are less permanent than those of the Nefûd. While we were watching them, the wind shifted, and it was interesting to observe how the summits of the ridges gradually changed with it, the lee side being always steep, the wind side rounded. We gradually ascended now through broken ground to the edge of a level gravelly plain, beyond which about four miles distant we could see the red line of the real Nefûd. We had nearly crossed this, when we sighted an animal half a mile away, and galloped off in pursuit, Mohammed following. I thought at first it must be a wolf or a wild cow, but as we got nearer to it, we saw that it was a hyæna,

and it seemed to be carrying something in its mouth. The dogs now gave chase, and the beast made off as fast as it could go for the broken ground we had just left, and where it probably had its den, dropping in its hurry the leg of a gazelle, the piece of booty it was bringing with it from the Nefûd. The three greyhounds boldly attacked it, Sayad especially seizing it at the shoulder, but they were unable to stop it, and it still went on doggedly intent on gaining the broken ground. It would have escaped had not we got in front and barred the way. Then it doubled back again, and we managed to drive it before us towards where we had left our camels. I never saw so cowardly a creature, for though much bigger than any dog, it never offered to turn round and defend itself as a boar or even a jackal would have done, and the dogs were so persistent in their attacks, that Wilfrid had great difficulty in getting a clear shot at it, which he did at last, rolling it over as it cantered along almost under the feet of our camels. Great of course were the rejoicings, for though Mohammed and Awwâd affected some repugnance, Abdallah declared boldly and at once, that hyæna was "khosh lahm," capital meat. So it was flayed and quartered on the spot. I confess the look of the carcass was not appetising, the fat with which it was covered being bright yellow, but hyænas in the desert are not the ghoul-like creatures they become in the neighbourhood of towns, and on examination

the stomach was found to be full of locusts and fresh gazelle meat. Wilfrid pronounces it eatable, but I, though I have just tasted a morsel, could not bring myself to make a meal off it. I perceive that in spite of protestations about unclean food, the whole of this very large and fat animal has been devoured by our followers. I am not sure whether Mohammed kept his resolution of abstaining.

Locusts are now a regular portion of the day's provision with us, and are really an excellent article of diet. After trying them in several ways, we have come to the conclusion that they are best plain boiled. The long hopping legs must be pulled off, and the locust held by the wings, dipped into salt and eaten. As to flavour this insect tastes of vegetable rather than of fish or flesh, not unlike green wheat in England, and to us it supplies the place of vegetables, of which we are much in need. The red-locust is better eating than the green one.* Wilfrid considers that it would hold its own among the *hors d'œuvre* at a Paris restaurant; I am not so sure of this, for on former journeys I have resolved that other excellent dishes should be adopted at home, but afterwards among the multitude of luxuries, they have not been found worth the trouble of preparation. For catching locusts, the morning is the time, when they are half benumbed by the cold, and their wings are damp with the dew, so that they

* Red is said to be the female and green the male, but some say *all* are green at first and become red afterwards.

cannot fly; they may then be found clustered in hundreds under the desert bushes, and gathered without trouble, merely shovelled into a bag or basket. Later on, the sun dries their wings and they are difficult to capture, having intelligence enough to keep just out of reach when pursued. Flying, they look extremely like May flies, being carried side-on to the wind. They can steer themselves about as much as flying fish do, and can alight when they like; in fact, they very seldom let themselves be drifted against men or camels, and seem able to calculate exactly the reach of a stick. This year they are all over the country, in enormous armies by day, and huddled in regiments under every bush by night. They devour everything vegetable; and are devoured by everything animal: desert larks and bustards, ravens, hawks, and buzzards. We passed to-day through flocks of ravens and buzzards, sitting on the ground gorged with them. The camels munch them in with their food, the greyhounds run snapping after them all day long, eating as many as they can catch. The Bedouins often give them to their horses, and Awwad says that this year many tribes have nothing to eat just now but locusts and camels' milk; thus the locust in some measure makes amends for being a pestilence, by being himself consumed.

We are encamped to-night once more in the Nefûd, amongst the same herbage, and at the edge of one of the same kind of fuljes, we were accus-

tomed to on our way from Jôf. This Nefûd, however, is intermittent, as there are intervening tracts of bare ground, between the ridges of sand which here very distinctly run east and west. The sand is not more than eighty feet deep, and the fuljes are insignificant compared with what we saw further west.

February 11.—Some boys with camels joined us last night, Bedouins from the Abde tribe of Shammar, on their way to meet the Haj, as they have been ordered up by Ibn Rashid. They have given us some information about the road. Ibn Duala is five days' journey on; but we shall find the Dafir, with their Shŕeykh, Ibn Sueyti, on the second day. Ibn Sueyti, they say, has a kind of *uttfa* like Ibn Shaalan's, but it is pitched like a tent when a battle is to be fought. The Ajman, near Queyt, have a real uttfa with ostrich feathers and a girl to sing during the fighting.* They also narrated the following remarkable tale.

There is, they say, in the desert, five days' march from here to the eastwards, and ten days from Suk es Shiôkh on the Euphrates, a kubr or tomb, the resting-place of a prophet named Er Refay. It is called Tellateyn el Kharab (the two hills of the ruins), and near it is a birkeh or tank always full of water. The tomb has a door which stands open, but round it there sleeps all day and all night a huge snake, whose mouth and tail nearly meet,

* Compare Mr. Palgrave's account.

leaving but just room for anyone to pass in. This it prevents unless the person presenting himself for entrance is a dervish, and many dervishes go there to pray. Inside there is a well, and those who enter are provided ("min Allah") for three days with food, three times a day, but on the fourth they must go. A lion is chained up by the neck inside the kubr.

The birkeh outside is always full of water, but its shores are inhabited by snakes, who spit poison into the pool so that nothing can drink there. But at evening comes the ariel (a fabulous antelope), who strikes the water with his horns, and by so doing makes it sweet. Then all the beasts and birds of the desert follow him, and drink. The Sheykh of the Montefyk is bound to send camels and guides with all dervishes who come to him at Suk-es-Shiôkh to make the pilgrimage to Refay. The boys did not say that they had themselves seen the place.

We are not on the high road now, having left it some miles to the right, and our march to-day has been mostly through Nefûd. The same swarms of locusts everywhere, and the same attendant flocks of birds, especially of fine black buzzards, one of which Abdallah was very anxious to secure if possible, as he says the wing bones are like ivory, and are used for inlaying the stocks of guns and stems of pipes. But he had no success, though he fired several times. Wilfrid was more fortunate, however, in getting what we value more, a bustard,

and the very best bird we ever ate. Though they are common enough here, it is seldom that they come within shot, but this one was frightened by the hawk, and came right overhead.

About noon, we came to a solitary building, standing in the middle of the Nefûd, called Kasr Torba. It is square, with walls twenty feet high, and has a tower at each corner. It is garrisoned by four men, soldiers of Ibn Rashid's, who surlily refused us admittance, and threatened to fire on us if we drew water from the well outside. For a moment we thought of storming the place, which I believe we could have done without much difficulty, as the door was very rotten and we were all very angry and thirsty, but second thoughts are generally accepted as best in Arabia, and on consideration, we pocketed the affront and went on.

Soon afterwards, we overtook a young man and his mother, travelling with three delûls in our direction. They were on the look-out, they said, for their own people, who were somewhere in the Nefûd, they didn't quite know where. There are no tracks anywhere, however, and they have stopped for the night with us. Very nice people, the young fellow attentive and kind to his mother, making her a shelter under a bush with the camel saddles. They are Shammar, and have been on business to Haïl.

February 12.—Our disappointment about water yesterday, has forced us back on to the Haj road

and the wells of Khuddra, thirteen or fourteen miles east of last night's camp. We had, however, some sport on our way. First, a hare was started and the falcon flown. The Nefûd is so covered with bushes, that without the assistance of the bird the dogs could have had no chance, for it was only by watching the hawk's flight that they were able to keep on the hare's track. It was a pretty sight, the bird above doubling as the hare doubled, and the three dogs below following with their noses in the air. We made the best of our way after them, but the sand being very deep they were soon out of sight. Suddenly we came to the edge of the Nefûd, and there, a few hundred yards from the foot of the last sand-bank, we saw the falcon and the grey-hounds all sitting in a circle on the ground, watching a large hole into which the hare had just bolted. The four pursuers looked so puzzled and foolish, that in spite of the annoyance of losing the game, we could not help laughing. Hares in the desert always go to ground. Mohammed and Abdallah and Awwad were keen for digging out this one, and they all worked away like navvies for more than half an hour, till they were up to their shoulders in the sandy earth (here firm ground), but it was in vain, the hole was big enough for a hyæna, and reached down into the rock below. Further on, however, we had better luck, and having run another hare to ground, pulled out not only it, but a little silver grey fox, where they were both

crouched together. I do not think the hares ever dig holes, but they make use of any they can find when pressed. We also coursed some gazelles.

There are fourteen wells at Khuddra, mere holes in the ground, without parapet or anything to mark their position, and as we drew near, we were rather alarmed at finding them occupied by a large party of Bedouins. It looked like a ghazú, for there were as many men as camels, thirty or forty of them with spears; and the camels wore shedads instead of pack saddles. They did not, however, molest us, though their looks were far from agreeable. They told us they were Dafir waiting like the rest for the Haj; that their Sheykh, Ibn Sueyti, was still two days' march to the eastwards, beyond Lina, which is another group of wells something like these; and they added, that they had heard of us and of our presents to the Emir, the rifle which fired twelve shots, and the rest. It is extraordinary how news travels in the desert. I noticed that Mohammed when questioned by them, said that he was from Mosul, and he explained afterwards that the Tudmur people had an old standing blood feud with the Dafir in consequence of some ghazú made long before his time, in which twenty of the latter were killed.* This has decided us not to pay Ibn Sueyti the visit we had intended. It appears that there has been a battle lately between the Dafir

* Compare Fatalla's account of the war between the Mesenneh and the Dafir near Tudmor at the beginning of the present century.

and the Amarrat (Ánazeh), in which a member of the Ibn Haddal family was killed. This proves that the Ánazeh ghazús sometimes come as far south as the Nefûd. These wells are seventy feet deep, and the water when first drawn smells of rotten eggs; but the smell goes off on exposure to the air.

The zodiacal light is very bright this evening; it is brightest about two hours after sunset, but though I have often looked out for it, I have never seen it in the morning before sunrise. It is a very remarkable and beautiful phenomenon, seen only, I believe, in Arabia. It is a cone of light extending from the horizon half-way to the zenith, and is rather brighter than the Milky Way.

February 13.—We have travelled quite twenty-four miles to-day, having had nothing to distract our attention from the road, and have reached the first of the reservoirs of Zobeydeh.

To my surprise this, instead of being on low ground, is as it were on the top of a hill. At least, we had to ascend quite two hundred feet to get to it, though there was higher ground beyond. It is built across a narrow wady of massive concrete, six feet thick, and is nearly square, eighty yards by fifty. The inside descends in steps for the convenience of those who come for water, but a great rent in the masonry has let most of this out, and now there is only a small mud-hole full of filthy water in the centre. We found some Arabs there with their camels, who went away when they saw us, but we

sent after them to make inquiries, and learnt that they were Beni Wâhari, a new artificial compound tribe of Sherârat, Shammar and others, made up by Ibn Rashid with a slave of his own for their Sheykh. They are employed in taking care of camels and mares for the Emir. They talk of eight days' journey now to Meshhed Ali, but Wilfrid says it cannot be less than fifteen or sixteen.

Mohammed, who has been very anxious to make himself agreeable, now he is quite away from Haïl influences, has been telling us a number of stories and legends, all more or less connected with his birthplace Tudmur. He has a real talent as a narrator, an excellent memory, and that most valuable gift, the manner of a man who believes what he relates. Here is one of his tales, a fair specimen of the extraordinary mixture of fable and historic tradition to be found in all of them:

Suliman ibn Daoud (Solomon, son of David) loved a Nasraniyeh (a Christian woman), named the Sitt Belkís,* and married her. This Christian lady wished to have a house between Damascus and Irak (Babylonia), because the air of the desert was good, but no such a house could be found. Then Solomon, who was king of the birds as well as king of men, sent for all the birds of the air to tell him where he should look for the place Belkís desired, and they all answered his summons but one, Nissr (the eagle),

* Belkís is the name usually given by tradition to the Queen of Sheba.

who did not come. And Solomon asked them if any knew of a spot between Damascus and Irak, in the desert where the air was good. But they answered that they knew of none. And he counted them to see if all were there, and found that the eagle was missing. Then he sent for the eagle, and they brought him to Solomon, and Solomon asked him why he had disobeyed the first summons. And Nissr answered, that he was tending his father, an old eagle, so old that he had lost all his feathers, and could not fly or feed himself unless his son was there. And Solomon asked Nissr if he knew of the place wanted by Belkís; and Nissr answered that his father knew, for he knew every place in the world, having lived four thousand years. And Solomon commanded that he should be brought before him in a box, for the eagle could not fly. But when they tried to carry the eagle he was so heavy that they could not lift him. Then Solomon gave them an ointment, and told them to rub the bird with it and stroke him thus, and thus, and that he would grow young again. And they did so, and the feathers grew on his back and wings, and he flew to Solomon, and alighted before the throne. And Solomon asked him, "where is the palace that the Sitt Belkís requires, between Damascus and Irak, in the desert where the air is good?" and the eagle answered, "It is Tudmur, the city which lies beneath the sand." And he showed them the place. And Solomon ordered the

jinns to remove the sand, and when they had done so, there lay Tudmur with its beautiful ruins and columns.

Still there was no water. For the water was locked up in a cave in the hills by a serpent twenty thousand double arms' length long, which blocked the mouth of the cave. And Solomon called on the serpent to come out. But the serpent answered that she was afraid. And Solomon promised that he would not kill her. But as soon as she was half way out of the cave (and they knew it by a black mark on her body which marked half her length), Solomon set his seal upon her and she died. And the jinns dragged her wholly out and the water ran. Still it was poisonous with the venom of the serpent, and the people could not drink. Then Solomon took sulphur (kubrit) and threw it into the cave, and the water became sweet. And the sulphur is found there to this day.

Mohammed says also that ghosts (afrit) are very common among the ruins at Tudmur—also (more curious still) that there is a man at Tudmur more than a hundred years old, and that when he reached his hundredth year he cut a complete new set of teeth, and is now able to eat like a young man.* So he beguiled the evening.

February 14.—We have passed more birkehs in better repair than the first, and being now in the

* I have since been told by dentists that the fact of a third set of teeth being cut in old age is not unknown to science.

neighbourhood of water, find a good many Bedouins on the road. Jedur (the Shammar with the mother, with whom we are still travelling, and whom we like particularly) knows everybody, and it is well that he is with us, as some of these Bedouins are rough looking fellows with hang-dog countenances (especially the Dafir and the Sellem), which we don't quite like. To-day, as Wilfrid and I were riding apart from our caravan, a number of men ran towards us without any salaam aleykum and began calling to us to stop. But we did not let them get within arm's length, and bade them ask their questions from a distance. We shall have to keep watch to-night. The road is now regularly marked out with a double wall, which we are told was built by Zobeydeh to hang an awning from, so that the pilgrims might travel in the shade. But this must be nonsense. It is more likely that it is merely the effect of the road having been cleared of the big stones which here cover the plain.

* * * * *

Since writing this a curious thing has happened. We encamped early inside a ruined birkeh and had just got all in order for the night, when we perceived six men on dromedaries riding down from the north-east, straight towards us. There was much speculation of course amongst us, as to who they might be, honest men or robbers, Shammar or Dafir.

They evidently were not a mere party of camels for the Haj, as each delúl was mounted by a man with a lance, and they came on at a trot. They rode straight to where we were, made their camels kneel down, took off khurjs and shedads and then arranged their bivouac for the night. Then they came up to our tents and accosted Mohammed and the servants, who of course invited them to sit down and drink coffee. Mohammed presently came to us and whispered that he felt convinced they were Dafir, but that we should presently know for certain. They sat down and began talking on general subjects, as the custom is till coffee has been served, but afterwards Mohammed asked them whence they had come and whither they were going. They answered that they were Ketherin, sent by their Sheykh to Haïl on business, and explained further that their object was to find a certain relative of their Sheykh's whom he had heard of as being a guest at Ibn Rashid's and to invite him to their tents. Perhaps we might have heard of him, his name was Mohammed ibn Arûk. And their Sheykh's name? Muttlak ibn Arûk! Here is a *coup de théâtre!* Mohammed's long-lost relation, the third brother of the three who left Aared in the eighteenth century and parted company at Jôf, has been discovered in his descendant, whose servants are at this moment in our camp. Imagine the joy of Mohammed and the triumph of so appropriate an occasion for reciting once more the kasíd Ibn Arûk. The rhymes of

that well-known legend, recited by Mohammed and responded to by the new comers in chorus, were indeed the first intimation we had of what had happened. Then the Ketherin ambassadors were brought to our tent and their story told. Now all ideas of Bussorah and Meshhed Ali and the Haj are abandoned, and, for the moment, there is no other plan for any of us but an immediate visit to these new relations. One of the Ketherin has already started off homewards to announce the joyful event, and the rest will turn back with us to-morrow. Muttlak's tents are not more than a day's journey from where we now are, and we shall see these long-lost cousins to-morrow before the sun goes down. "Yallah," exclaimed Mohammed, beaming with joy and pride.

February 15.—We made a late start, for Mohammed has lost his head again and is playing the fine gentleman, as he did at Haïl, afraid or ashamed to be seen by his new acquaintances doing any sort of work. Instead of helping to pack or load the camels, he would do nothing but sit on the ground playing with his beads, and calling to Awwad to saddle his delúl,—airs and graces which, I am glad to see, are thrown away on the Ketherin, who, as Bedouins, care little for the vanities of life. Even when started, we did not get far, for it began to thunder and lighten, and presently to rain heavily, so that Wilfrid ordered a halt at half-past ten. We have now come to the great birkehs which

are full of water. They stand in a valley called the Wady Roseh, from a plant of that name which grows in it, and is much prized as pasture for both camels and horses. There are two tanks near us, one round, the other square, and both of the same fashion as the first we saw. We have been examining the construction and find that the walls were originally built hollow, of stone, and filled up with concrete. This is now as hard as granite, and has a fine polish on the surface. The water is beautifully clear and good. The largest of the tanks is sixty-four yards by thirty-seven, and perhaps twelve feet deep. There is a ruined khan of the same date close by, and Wilfrid has discovered an immense well ten feet wide at the mouth and very deep. All these were constructed by Zobeydeh, the wife of the Caliph Haroun er-Rashid, who nearly died of thirst on her way back from Mecca and so had the wells and tanks dug. Wilfrid believes that no European has visited them before, though they are marked vaguely on Chesney's map. A wild day has ended with a fine sunset. Dinner, not of stalled ox, nor of herbs, but of boiled locusts and rice, with such bread as we can manage to make of flour well mixed with sand.

Mohammed, who has been in the agonies of poetic composition for a week past, has at last delivered himself of the following kasîd or ballad, which I believe is intended as a pendant to the original Ibn Arûk kasîd, with which he sees we are bored.

KASÍD IBN ARÚK EL JEDÍDE.

Naházrma min esh Sham, el belád el bayíde,
Némshi ma el wudiân wa el Beg khaláwa.
Wa tobéyt aéla Jôf, dar jedíde.
Yaáz ma tílfi ubrobok khaláwi.
Naházret 'Abu Túrki, aálumi bayíde,
Dábakha lil khottár héyle semáne.
Ya marhába bil Beg wa es Sitt Khatún.
Talóbbt bíntu gal jaátka atíye.
Wa siâghahu min el Beg khámsin mía.
Khatún, ya bint el akrám wa el juwádi.
Khatún, ya bint el Amáva wa el kebár.
Ya Robb, selémli akhúi el Beg wa es Sitt Khatún.
Ya Robb, wasálhom diyar essalámi,
Wa dar el Ajjem wa belad hade Hanûd,
Wa yetóbb aál bahûr sébba khaláwi,
Wa yetóbb aála Lóndra wa yekéllem efnún,
Wa yehágg el sahíbe aála ma sar jári.

NEW BALLAD OF IBN ARÚK.

I went out from Damascus, the far-off country.
I marched through the lone valley, with the Beg alone.
I lighted down at Jôf, at a new built dwelling.
Dear are the souls it shelters. "Guests," he said, "sit down."
"See, Abu Turki, see," I called, "thy kinsmen."
"Bring first for these," he cried, "a fatted lamb.
"Welcome, O Beg, welcome O Lady Khatún,
"Welcome, O distant kinsman, to your home."
I asked him for his daughter. "Take her dowerless."
"Her dower be these, five thousand," said the Beg.
Lady, O daughter of the great the generous!
Lady, O daughter of a princely line!
O Lord, keep safe my brother and the Khatún.
Grant them to reach the dwellings of repose.
Guide them through Persia and far Hind and lead them
By all the seven seas in safety home.
Let them once more behold their friends and London.
Let them relate the things that they have done.

CHAPTER XV.

"Here lie I down, and measure out my grave,
Farewell, kind master."—SHAKESPEARE.

Muttlak Ibn Arûk and the Ketherin—Their horses—We are adopted by the tribe—The Haj again—Ambar sends round the hat—A forced march of one hundred and seventy miles—Terrible loss of camels—Nejef.

February 16.—Two Aslan Shammar of the Jezireh came last night, and recognised us as having been in Ferhan Pasha's camp, last year, in Mesopotamia,—a very pleasant meeting, though we have no distinct recollection of either of them. They gave us all the latest Jezireh news in politics. Ferhan and his brother Faris are now at open war, though Ferhan is no fighter himself, and leaves the conduct of affairs to his eldest son, Aassa. All the Shammar of the Jezireh are with Faris, except Ferhan's own tail, and the Abde, and the Asslan, Muttany's men, and our old friend Smeyr ibn-Zeydan. It is true also that Faris is now friends with Jedaan. All this we are glad to hear.

This morning, Jedur and his mother left us, as they are not going any further our way. I like them both, and should have been glad to give the mother some small remembrance of our journey together, but, as Arabs do, they went away without

saying good-bye. Our march to-day was a short one, nine or ten miles, still down the Wady Roseh, where water has actually been running since the late storm, and where there are pools still here and there, and a large swamp full of ducks, storks, and snipe,—the first water above ground we have seen since the Wady er-Rajel, nearly two months ago. There is capital grass, too, in the wady, a few inches high, which our hungry mares enjoy thoroughly. As we were stopping to let them and the camels graze on a particularly inviting spot, suddenly we perceived about thirty delúl riders coming over the hill to our right. Although it was probable that this was Muttlak, we all prepared for defence, making the camels kneel down, and seizing each his best weapon,—Wilfrid the rifle, I the gun, and Mohammed his large revolver. Awwad stood ready, sword in hand, and Abdallah squatted with his long gun pointed towards the new-comers; the rest, except Izzar, who possesses a sword, had only sticks, but made a formidable appearance.

There was no need, however, for alarm, for, presently, one of the approaching party detached himself from the rest, and trotting his dromedary towards us, saluted us in a loud voice, and we saw that it was Hazzam, the man who had gone on to announce our coming to Muttlak. In another five minutes the Sheykh himself had dismounted. There was of course a great deal of kissing and embracing between Mohammed and his new found relations,

and Wilfrid came in for a share of it. Muttlak is a charming old man, very quiet and very modest, but possessed of considerable dignity. He has an expression of extreme kindness and gentleness which is very attractive, and we already like him better than any of Mohammed's Jôf relations. Unlike the Ibn Arûks of Jôf and Tudmur, this branch of the family has remained Bedouin, and unmixed by any fellahin alliances. Mohammed's rather vulgar pretensions to birth and dignity have fallen, ashamed before the simplicity of this good old man, the true representative of the Ibn Arûks of Aared, and though the kasíd has been trotted out once more, and the family genealogy stated and compared, it has been with modesty and decorum, and the sadness which befits decayed fortunes. There can be no question here who shall take the upper place, the Sheykh himself being always ready to take the lowest. To us he is charming in his attentions, and without false dignity in his thanks for the small presents* we have made him. He is to stay with us to-night, and then he will take us to his tents to-morrow.

Muttlak has brought us three sheep for a present. He has with him a very handsome falcon, a lanner like ours, but larger.

February 17.—We left our camp in the Wady Roseh, where Muttlak told us there was better pasture than we should find with him, and rode off

* Presents of honour always given to a sheykh.

on our mares to pay him a morning visit and return at night. Muttlak has with him his own little mare, the counterpart of himself, old and without other pretension than extreme purity of descent. She is a kehîlet Omm Jerass (mother of bells), and was once in Ibn Saoud's stables. It is difficult to describe her, for her merits are not on the surface; I am sure nine out of ten English dealers would pass her over, if they saw her at Tattersall's or Barnet Fair, as an insignificant little pony. She is very small, hardly over 13 hands, for even Mohammed's mokhra looks tall beside her, chestnut with four white feet and a blaze, a good but not a pretty head, and, but for a proud carriage of the tail, no style or action; an old brood mare never ridden except on state occasions like the present, for on ordinary occasions no Arab of Nejd thinks of riding anything but a delúl. As Muttlak said, very gravely, "When God has given you a mare that is *asil*, it is not that *you* should ride, but that *she* should breed foals." The old man stuck to his delúl, and the little mare was ridden by his cousin Shatti, who went with us, and gave us some valuable information by the way. The Ketherin, like all the tribes of Nejd, were formerly under Ibn Saoud. They are a branch of the Beni Khalid, who, in their turn, are a branch of the Beni Laam, an ancient and noble tribe, of which the main stock is still found between Aared and Katîf, while another branch settled some centuries ago beyond the Tigris, on the Persian frontier. The

Ketherin are now few in number and decayed in circumstances, but Shatti informed us, with some pride, they can still turn out a hundred khayal on occasion; that is to say, if they are attacked and obliged to fight. This shows more than anything the small number of horses possessed by the tribes of Nejd. I asked Shatti which of the tribes still under Ibn Saoud are now most in repute as breeders of horses; and he told me the Muteyr or Dushan (for it seems they have both names), who could turn out four hundred horsemen. Their best breeds are Kehîlan Ajuz, Kehîlan el-Krush, Abeyan Sherrak, Maneghy Hedruj, and Rabdan Kesheyban, They have no Seglawis at all; the Krushiehs of Ibn Rashid came originally from them, Feysul having bought them from the tribe. It must not, however, be supposed, he said, that all the Dushan mares were asil. The Dushan, like every other tribe in Nejd and elsewhere, has "mehassaneh," or half-breds, what the Ánazeh would call "beni" or "banat hossan;" that is to say, animals with a stain in their pedigree, and therefore not asil, though often nearly as good and as good-looking. Their own breeds (that is to say, the Ketherin's) are principally Wadnan, Rishan, Rabdan, and Shueyman. As we got near the Ketherin tents we met two men on a delúl, leading a lovely little bay colt, one of the prettiest I ever saw, which Shatti told us was a Wadnan Horsan.

After nearly three hours' riding we arrived at

the *buyut shaar* (houses of hair), and were soon being hospitably entertained. It is the custom here, as it is in the Sahara, that the Sheykh should receive illustrious strangers, not in his own tent, but in a special tent set up for the purpose. It was a poor place, little more than an awning, but the welcome was hearty and sincere. Here all the principal people of the tribe assembled as soon as the news of our arrival spread, and a feast was prepared of tummin and fresh butter, and naga's milk. The Arabs never kill a lamb except for the evening meal.

After this entertainment I went to visit Muttlak's family, and on my return I found Wilfrid inspecting the mares which we had already seen grazing near the tents. There were half-a-dozen of them, fair average animals, but nothing first-rate, or so handsome as the Wadnan colt, nor any over fourteen hands high. We were looking at these rather disappointedly, when Hazzam ibn Arûk, Muttlak's brother, rode up on a really beautiful mare, which he told us was a Seglawieh Jedran, the only one left in Nejd. He added that they had been obliged to conceal the name of her breed for some years on account of the danger incurred of her being taken by force. In former times, when the Wahhabis were all powerful, any famous mare ran great risk of being seized for the Riad stables. Ibn Saoud would declare war with a tribe merely as an excuse for robbing it of its mares. Ibn Rashid, at the present day, put great pressure on the owners of valuable mares to make them sell;

but he paid for what he took. This mare had been often asked about both for Ibn Rashid, and for Nassr el-Ashgar, Sheykh of the Montefyk, who (or rather his brother Fahad now) has the best collection of horses after Ibn Rashid and Ibn Saoud. She is a fine bright bay, muttlak-el-yemin, snip on the nose; has a splendid way of moving when ridden, action like Hamúd's mare at Haïl, *handsome* rather than *racing*. The head is good, the eye bright and large, the forehead rather flat, the jowl deep; the wither high and back short, quarters round, like all the Nejd horses, sinews good, and hoofs large and round.

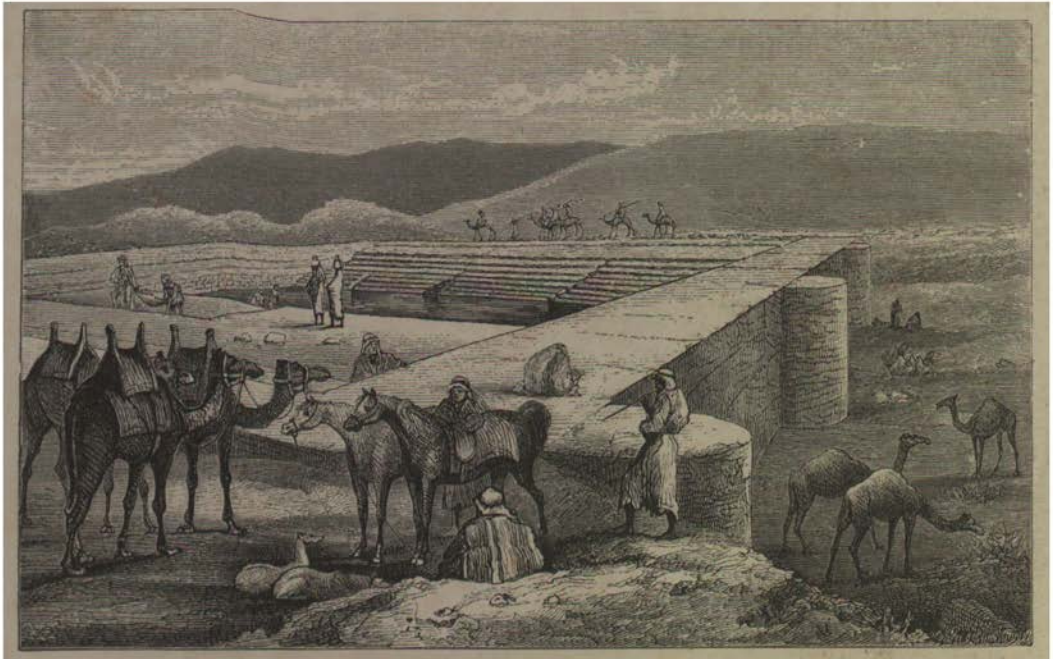
Hazzam's mare is under fourteen hands, but stands over much ground, and ought to be up to weight, being wonderfully compact. We had some hopes at one moment of being able to purchase her, and for a good price and money down I think it might have been done, for they are all most anxious to oblige us. But we have no money and our cheque on Bagdad would be difficult for them to cash. The Ketherin are this year in great distress, as there was no autumn rain, and until a month ago nothing that horses can eat. They are without corn or even dates, and but for the locusts, which have been abundant all the winter, they must have starved. Indeed locusts are still their main article of food, for man as well as beast. Great piles of these insects, dried over the fire, may be seen in every tent.

Amid a general chorus of good wishes, we at last took our leave of these good people. "You," they

said to Wilfrid, "shall be our Sheykh whenever you return to us. Muttlak will not be jealous. We will make war for you on all your enemies, and be friends with your friends." Muttlak himself has promised that there shall be a general council to-night to decide whether the tribe shall move northwards as has been proposed, or not, and that if it is decided that it shall be so, he will join us to-morrow morning, and travel with us to Meshhed to make arrangements with the intervening tribes, whose consent must first be obtained. It is strange what friendship we have made with these simple-hearted people in a few hours. We are the first Europeans they have seen, and they look upon us as beings of a superior world.

As we came back to the crest of the hill overlooking Wady Roseh, we saw away to the south a smoke rising—the Haj.

February 18.—We had walked down to the birkeh to try and stalk some ducks when the first runners of the Haj arrived, and presently the Haj itself, now swelled to double its former size, swept past us down the Wady. At the same moment Muttlak appeared on his delúl ready to go with us. This gave us great pleasure. He has got the consent of his tribe, and what is of more importance of the women of his family, to go with us to Meshhed Ali, and see what arrangements can be made with the Ánazeh Sheykhs for a migration of the Ketherin northwards. Such migrations have, I fancy, taken



RESERVOIR OF ZOBEYDEH.

[*Vol. II., p. 80.*

place in all ages among the Bedouins of Arabia, the want of pasture constantly driving them outwards from Central Arabia to the richer deserts of Syria and Mesopotamia. In this way the Shammar and the Ánazeh obtained their present inheritance of the Hamád and the Jezireh, and thus in still earlier times the Taï abandoned Nejd.

Muttlak's equipment for the journey is of the simplest kind, the clothes in which he stands. He and a single attendant are mounted together on an old black dromedary, the Sheykh perched on the saddle, and his man kneeling behind, their only weapon a stick, and they guide the delúl with a rope passed through a hole in his nostril, a primitive arrangement. "There," we said to Mohammed, "that is how your ancestors left Nejd." The old man is very pious; unlike the Ánazeh and other tribes of the north, these Bedouins of Nejd say their prayers regularly, and profess the Mussulman creed, and Muttlak's first act on dismounting this evening in camp, was to go apart with his attendant and pray. Mohammed and Abdallah still say their prayers occasionally, though with less and less fervour as the distance from Haïl grows greater. Awwad's devotion is of a very varying quality, sometimes quite imperceptible, at others almost alarming. I have noticed that any special stress of work in loading the camels of a morning, or pitching the tents at night, is sure to call forth a burst of spiritual fervour. At such times his la-

ilaha-illa-llah goes on for a prodigious length of time, and may be heard a quarter of a mile off.

Ambar, the negro emir-el-haj, has brought a polite message for us from Ibn Rashid. He came with the Haj as far as Khuddra, and then went back to Haïl, so we have lost nothing by not going with him on his intended ghazú.

Having camped early we sent Abdallah and Hanna to the Haj to find out our Persian friends there, and invite them to dine with us, as we had killed a sheep, and just before sunset they arrived, Ali Koli Khan, Huseyn Koli Khan, and Abd er-Rahim of Kermanshah. We seated them all on a carpet outside our little tent, for it is a warm evening, and then the dinner was served. But much to our vexation, for we had carefully arranged the entertainment, they refused to eat anything, first saying that they had already dined, and afterwards admitting that the Mollahs in whose company they were travelling, had forbidden their eating with us during the Haj. They were very polite, however, and made all sorts of apologies, and even took one mouthful each to avoid being positively rude. Ali said that but for his mother's Mollah, he would have asked us to dine with him, for he has a good cook, but under the circumstances it cannot be. Huseyn, who is the son of an ex-vizier, pretended to speak French, but the only complete phrase which he had at command, and which seemed borrowed from a copy-book, was, "L'Arabe est charlatan." This he

repeated in and out of season, whenever there was a pause in the conversation. These Persians were as loud as ever in their complaints against the Arabs, and being now out of his dominions, did not spare the Emir, whom they accused of having plundered them terribly. They also had much to tell of the extortions of the hemeldaria, or contractors for the Haj.

It appears that each pilgrim, when he starts for Mecca, puts himself into the hands of an Arab contractor, generally a native of Meshhed Ali, who undertakes to provide him with transport, either in the shape of riding dromedaries, or litters, or even in some cases, mules or horses. He does this for a sum of money down, accepting all risks, and is bound to replace any animal that breaks down or dies on the road, with another at a moment's notice. It is a very speculative business, as if all goes well with the Haj, the hemeldaria makes a fortune, whereas if things go badly, he may lose one. In some years great numbers of camels die, and then the contractors are ruined; but generally they make a very good thing out of it, as their charges are enormous. At any rate they seem very rich, and ride about themselves on the finest dromedaries in the Haj, and wear the finest clothes. There are twenty of these contractors now with the Haj, who divide the two thousand Persian pilgrims amongst them. Besides the Persians there are about a hundred Shias from Bagdad and Bussorah, but these do not mix much with the Persians, and a body-guard of about a thousand Bedouins, Ibn

Rashid's people. In all, over three thousand persons, with five thousand camels. It must be like the journey of the children of Israel to Mount Sinai.

Ali Koli Khan left Haïl with the Emir, nearly a week after we did, so we did not need to be in any hurry, but I think we were right to get clear away while we could.

February 19.—An early start before sunrise, though there were stragglers till seven o'clock. We were the last to go, but we had sent our camels on as there was good grass, and we wanted our mares to have a comfortable feed. Occasionally one of the pilgrims would come and sit down a moment by our fire to warm his hands. We have now quite left the Nefûd, and are travelling over broken stony ground. The Haj marches fast, quite three miles an hour, and there is no stopping on the way. We are halted this evening at the last of the reservoirs of Zobeydeh, the Birkeh Jemaymeh (Jemima's pool). Here there are considerable ruins and a very large well.

The boy Izzar has left us, I am sorry to say, and he is sorry too. He was very serviceable and pleasant, and we lose with him his naga's milk, which we have been drinking fresh every morning. (N.B. We will never travel again without a she camel for milk.) But his delúls have been impressed for the Haj. We gave him three mejidies (about ten shillings) for his ten days' service, which brought down blessings on our heads. I do not think he expected anything.

February 20.—Again the Haj has come to a stand-still, to the renewed wrath of the pilgrims. It is now twenty days since they left Haïl and not more than half the journey has been accomplished. There are two hundred miles more of road, and their provisions, calculated for three weeks, are all but run out. What makes this new delay the more aggravating to them is that it has been ordered by the negro Ambar, so that he may send the hat round for a private contribution to his own benefit. He has made it known that two mejidies a head is what he expects, and that he will not move till the sum is forthcoming. This will be a nice little purse for him, something like eight hundred pounds, and we maintain a fleet in the Red Sea to suppress the slave trade, out of motives of humanity! The Persians are powerless to resist, for without the black man's order, not a camel would move. We, as Ibn Rashid's guests, are exempted from all toll or tax whatever, but we want to get on. Fortunately we laid in a whole month's provisions at Haïl.

The day has been a very hot one, and we have had the tent propped up all round, so that it resembles a gigantic umbrella. It is pitched on a hill overlooking the Haj, and has attracted a good many visitors. The first of them was a certain Seyd Mustafa, a native of Shustar in Persia, but speaking Arabic well. He is travelling as interpreter with Ali Koli Khan, and has given us some

information about the country between Bagdad and his own town. Ali Koli has several times proposed that we should go on with him from Bagdad, to pay a visit to his father in the Bactíari mountains, and Wilfrid is very much bent on doing this.

He himself is going round by the river to Bussorah, and then up the Karun to Shustar, a plan which would not suit us; but Seyd Mustafa says he will go with us by land, though it is a very difficult country to get through. The frontier between Turkey and Persia is occupied by the Beni Laam who recognise neither the Sultan nor the Shah. The Beni Laam however, ought to receive us well from our connection with the Ibn Arûks, and a visit to them would almost complete our acquaintance with the Arab tribes north of Nejd.

Next two poor women came, an old and a young one, dressed alike in white rags. They are from Bagdad, and have made the pilgrimage barefoot and begging their bread. One of them carries a tin mug, into which somebody had just thrown a handful of barley. I gave them a loaf of bread, with which they went away invoking blessings on me. They seem perfectly contented and happy.

Then we had a visit from some Bagdadis; one had been a soldier, the others shopkeepers. They were pilgrims, however, now, and not *on business*, as most of the Arabs here are.

Next a Ḍafir boy, with a lamb and a skin of fresh butter to sell, the butter mixed up with date-

skins and hair, and coloured yellow with a plant called saffron. After much haggling (for stinginess in a purchaser inspires respect) we bought the lamb and the butter for a mejidie—four shillings.

Next a Jinfaneh Shammar, with a bay horse, also for sale, a Kehîlan Ajuz fourteen hands, with good jowl, good shoulder, and tail well carried, but rather small eye, thick nose, and coarse hind quarter—altogether strong with plenty of bone—aged, very much aged! We do not want him.

Then an Ibn Duala, with a Wadneh mare, also bay, thirteen hands three inches, or fourteen hands—pretty head, with projecting forehead, very good jowl, good shoulder, but thick nose and coarse hind-quarter, rather high on the legs, with a good deal of hair on the fetlocks. They all seem to have the same faults.

I asked the Jinfaneh Shammar about the well of Wakisa, marked on Chesney's map as eight hundred feet deep, but he laughed and said, "forty of these," holding out his arms, and Muttlak confirmed the statement; this would make it two hundred and forty, a much more probable depth.

Wilfrid in the meanwhile had been with Seyd Mustafa and Mohammed to the Haj, and had had tea with Huseyn Koli Khan. They also called on Ambar and Ali Koli Khan; but both were out. Most of the pilgrims were lying on their backs asleep in the sun. It was very hot.

Ambar's little white mare has been brought to

graze near our tents, for as usual we have chosen the best pasture for our camp. The slave with her says she is a Krushieh. She is a flea-bitten grey, very old and very small, but for her size powerful, with a good head, though not a handsome one, a very fine shoulder with high wither, the usual Nejd hind-quarter and manner of carrying the tail, legs like iron. To complete the picture, I must mention one knee swelled, all four feet much out of shape with long standing in the yard at Haïl, and very hairy heels. There are with the Haj several yearling colts bought by the hemeldaria for sale at Bagdad, scraggy little things more like goats than horses.

The sun has brought out a huge tarantula from the sand close to our tent. It is the first venomous reptile I have seen on the journey.

February 21.—Ambar seems determined to make up for lost time, and he has hurried the Haj on all day so that we have done over thirty miles. Our road has been through broken ground, the Wady el-Buttn (the valley of the stomach), where we saw a fox and some hares. One of these last the dogs caught after a long course, and another was run to ground. Abd er-Rahim, the Kermanshahi, rode with us a part of the day, mounted on the most lovely delúl that was ever seen; she is of a bright chestnut colour, with a coat like satin, a light fine mane rather darker than the rest, eyes more beautiful than those of the gazelle, and a style of going which I have not seen equalled by any

other camel. This delúl can canter and gallop as well as trot, and kept up with us very fairly when we were chasing the hare, though of course she could not really command a horse's pace. Abder-Rahim and Ali Koli Khan now both ride delúls, and have dressed themselves up in Arab fashion, all silk and gold, the mean-looking little Kurd being thus transformed into a fine gentleman. Their saddles, bridles, and trappings are also very gay, got up regardless of expense. They hired their delúls of Ibn Rashid for the journey, I forget exactly for what sum, but it was a good deal of money. The Persians will not eat hare; and Ali Koli Khan, who is travelling with a private chaplain, would not join us in our sport. Indeed he seems now to keep rather aloof from us, but Abd er-Rahim has no such scruples. We hear that a sermon was preached yesterday in camp, against the sin of holding intercourse with kaffirs.

This has been a long, tedious march, two of our camels being tired. We have come to the end of our provision of flour for them, and there is really very little they can eat on the road. Wilfrid makes it still a hundred and forty miles to Meshhed.

February 22.—We travelled yesterday through a low-lying district, bounded by cliffs a little in the style of Jôf (it is all called *el buttn*, the stomach), and this morning, soon after starting, we reached the end of it, and had to ascend two or three hundred feet, the last *akabah* or ascent being very steep.

Here there was a great confusion, as the road was narrowed to a single track, and the Haj had to go almost in single file, instead of in line, its usual way of travelling. The steepness of the cliff proved too much for more than one camel, tired as they were with yesterday's march and want of food. Among them poor Shenuan, the ugly camel of our string, gave in. He is not old, but has long been ailing, and for the last week has carried nothing but his pack-saddle, and been nothing but a trouble to us, still it cost us a pang to abandon him. He has had mange from the very beginning of our journey; in fact, he was the only camel of those originally purchased by Mohammed for us, to which we demurred at the outset. Our objections were overruled by Mohammed's arguments, that Shenuan's youth and strength would enable him to get over the effects of mange, but he never prospered, and did not recover from the fatigue of the Nefûd. Poor fellow, he was very loath to be left behind, and struggled on till he came to this hill, which was too much for him. We left him, I am glad to say, in a bit of wady where there was some grass, but I fear his chance is a small one. Camels seldom recover when they get past a certain stage of exhaustion. They break their hearts, like deer, and die. Poor Shenuan! I shall not easily forget his face, looking wistfully after his companions as they disappeared over the crest of the hill. He is the first of our small party that has fallen out of the

ranks, and we are depressed with the feeling that he may not be the last.

At the top of the cliff we came to a perfectly level plain, strewn with fine flints, and across this we have travelled all day. Its height above the sea is 1460 feet, and we find that ever since leaving Shaybeh, where the road turned north, we have been descending at an average rate of about ten feet per mile, but the descent is not regular, because of these cliffs which we have come to, which have all been, in a sense, contrary to the general declivity of the ground. About mid-day we came to a great pool of rain-water, at which the camels drank and the goat-skins were filled, a very welcome accident. Our march to-day was twenty-four miles.

February 23.—The flinty plain is called Mahamiyeh, and with the Buttn forms a neutral ground between the Shammar and the Ánazeh, who are here represented by the Amarrat, their Sheykh Ibn Haddal. It was somewhere about here that the battle was fought the other day, in which the Dafir got the best of it, and some of the Ibn Haddal were killed. The consequence of its being thus neutral is, that the Mahamiyeh is covered with dry grass of last year, uneaten by any flocks, a great boon to us; for there is no fresh grass yet.

Beyond the Mahamiyeh we came again to hills, amongst which we found the wells of Sherab, and beyond this again the ground sloped downwards until we came to a regular valley, which we

followed in its windings all the afternoon. This is the Wady Shebekkeh, which narrows in one place almost to a ravine. There water had evidently flowed not long ago, and we found some beautiful clear pools, beside which the Haj is camped. We ourselves are some two miles further on, where there is better pasture. The Haj camels are getting terribly thin. These forced marches (we came twenty-eight miles to-day) are telling on them, and their owners are complaining loudly. The pilgrims having only hired the camels, of course care nothing for their welfare, and will not let them graze as they go, because riding a camel which eats as it goes is rather tiresome. Then in the evening the tents have to be pitched in some spot where a large camp can stand altogether, irrespective of considerations of pasture, the poor camels often having to go two or three miles to their food. We manage better, and always choose our spot for their sakes more than our own. Two of our camels nevertheless are tired, but our camels are loaded far more heavily than those of the pilgrimage.

To-night we have had a long and serious talk with Muttlak about the Ketherin tribe, in which we now consider we have an interest. He promises that he will really come north as soon as he can make arrangements with the Sebaa, and we have in return promised him that we will set up a "house of hair" with them, and keep a few nagas and a mare or two, and a small flock of sheep. This

would be very agreeable, and serve as a *pied à terre* in the desert, quite independent of all the world.

February 24.—Another *akabah* had to be climbed to-day—another long winding road followed across another open plain. The wonder is why the road should wind where there is no obstacle to avoid and no object to reach by a circuit. But such is always the case. Everybody seemed cross with the hard work, enlivened only by an occasional course, in which the hare sometimes ran right in among the pilgrims, when there was a scrimmage with the dervishes for possession of the quarry. The dervishes, who are mostly from Bagdad, are ready to eat hare or anything else they can get, indeed everybody is at starvation point. The only cheerful one of our party is the stalwart Ibrahim, who has come out again now as a wag. To-day, as we were marching along, we passed a fat Persian on a very little donkey, whom Ibrahim began chaffing, but finding the Persian did not understand him, he ran up, and seizing hold, lifted donkey and man in his arms. I could not have believed it possible, had I not seen that the donkey's four legs were off the ground. The Persian did not seem to understand this joke better than the rest, but they are stolid people, and have had a long breaking in and experience in patience during the last four months.

We have found a peaceful spot for the night, with plenty of pasture and plenty of "jelleh" for fuel. The sun has set, but in the clear cold sky

there is a nearly new moon, which gives a certain amount of light.

Wilfrid is making plans for spending the spring in Persia, and the summer in India, regardless of such news as may meet us at Bagdad from England or elsewhere. Such plans, however pleasant as they are in the planning, cannot be counted on. Much may have happened in the three months since we have been cut off from all communication with Europe, or indeed any part of the world out of Arabia, and even the traveller most detached from all affections or thoughts of his distant home is liable to be seized by a sudden longing for green fields with buttercups and daisies. The passing note of a bird or the scent of a flower may be enough to upset a most admirably contrived plan.

February 25.—Twenty-seven miles of march yesterday, and thirty to-day.

The camels cannot last at this pace, but the Haj is pushing on now because the men are starving. It is said that to-morrow we may reach Kasr Ruheym, the first outpost of the Euphrates district, and there they may find supplies, but it must still be a long distance off, if our reckoning is not altogether incorrect. Wilfrid has kept a dead reckoning now ever since we left Damascus, calculating the direction by the compass, and the distance of each day's march by the pace of the camels, and in the thousand miles we have travelled, it may well be a little out—but according to it we should now be

forty-seven miles from Meshhed Ali, which should be to the north-west, not to the north of our present position.

The weather has become cold, and all day long a bitter wind blew in our faces. The vegetation has changed. In one place we saw some acacias, the first trees since we left Haïl, and some of those broom bushes which bear a flower smelling sweet like the flower of the bean, and called here by the Arabs, "*gurrtheh.*" The acacias have given their name to the wady, Wady Hasheb (the Valley of timber).

We had a good view of the berak unfurled to-day, and a respectable-looking pilgrim, who lives, he tells us, in the mosque of Abd-el-Kader at Bagdad, pointed out to us the motto and device in the centre of it; the sword, he says, is the sword of God, and under it is written "La ilaha ila'llahi, wa Mohammed rasuluhu (There is no God but God and Mohammed is his prophet). On the other side of the flag is written "Nasron min Allahi wa fathon karîbon (Victory is from God and success is near).

February 26.—This has been a long and hard day, over ten hours, and the whole time beating against a wind which cut through everything, the sky darkened with sand, driving right in our faces. We have however reached Kasr Ruheym, and all our camels are still alive. Many of the pilgrims' camels, sixty or some say seventy, lay down and died on the road. The beautiful thoroughbred

delúls cannot stand the cold, which is very unusual at this latitude so late in the season, and their owners are in despair. All the Haj is furious with Ambar, not the Persians only, but the Bedouin escort and the camel owners, for his dawdling marches at first, and his forced ones afterwards. In the last six days we have marched a hundred and seventy miles, the greater part of the Haj on foot, and almost fasting. What would an English army say to that? Yet not one of the men—nor even of the poor women—who have had to trudge along thus, has been left behind. For ourselves we have had no extra fatigue, for the change from camel-back to horse-back and back again is of itself a rest. Khrer, my delúl, has very even paces, so that one is not soon tired riding him.

We are here in clover, not actually at the Kasr, but in sight of it, encamped at the edge of a running stream! The stream rises here and is said to be perennial. There is a quantity of coarse sword grass growing beside it, and everything looks green and pretty to eyes wearied of desert scenes. A pair of francolins, disturbed by the sudden invasion of their resting-place, which they doubtless thought safely secluded from the world, are flying backwards and forwards, put up continually by the grazing camels, and are calling to each other from the bushes. This shows that we are approaching the Euphrates.

There is a village near the Kasr, about two miles from where we are; and a good many felláhín on

donkeys and horses have arrived with provisions for sale, but they have not brought a twentieth part of what is wanted for the Haj. A cry of "stop thief" already announces that we have returned to the Turkish Empire! It has not been heard since we left Mezárib.

February 27.—No abatement of the wind, but less sand. It appears that our acquaintances, Ali Koli Khan and Abd er-Rahim are missing, lost in yesterday's storm. They rode with us part of the afternoon, and then, hearing that Ruheym was not far off, they started away on their delúls in front of the Haj at a trot, and of course being Persians, lost their way, for the Persians are helpless people in the desert. The sand was very thick at the time, and they must have got out of the track. Ambar has sent people to look all over the country for them, but without result. They never reached Ruheym, and it is feared that they may have perished of cold in the night.

This delayed the Haj from starting early, and at one time it was given out that no move at all would be made to-day, which would have suited us well, as there was plenty of camel pasture at Ruheym, and two of our animals were quite at the end of their strength. But at eight o'clock the drum beat, and we were obliged to load and be off, for now that we had entered Turkish territory, there was danger on the road, and all must keep together. Ibn Rashid's protection would no longer avail.

The march was tedious, on account of the weariness of the camels, though cheered by the sight of the gilt dome of Meshhed Ali, shining like a star across the blue sea of Nejef, itself a lovely apparition. The sea of Nejef (or as the Arabs call it, the Sheríet-Ibn Haddal), is the counterpart of the Birket el-Korn in the Egyptian Fayum, an artificial lake, formed by cutting a canal from the Euphrates; it is about twenty miles long, by six or seven broad. It is probably of Babylonian origin, though the Arabs say it was made by an Ibn Haddal ancestor of the present Amarrat Sheykhs, so that his camels might have a drinking pool. The Ibn Haddal were, till comparatively lately, lords of the whole of this district, and levied tribute on Meshhed Ali and Huseyn. The town stands upon the eastern shore above a fine line of limestone cliffs, and remained in sight all day long, as we wound slowly round the lake. It was a beautiful sight as far as nature was concerned, but made horrible by the sufferings of the poor dying camels, which now lay thick upon the road, with their unfortunate owners, poor Bedouins perhaps with nothing else in the world, standing beside them, luggage and bedding strewn about, which the pilgrims were trying to carry off on their heads, seeing the journey so nearly over.

Many of the camels had rushed into the lake, to drink, and lain down there, never to get up again. Others could just move one foot before the other, following at the rate of perhaps a mile an hour, with

hopeless glazed eyes, and poor emaciated bodies bare of all burden, even of the shedad. We who started late because we were not ready, and had thought to remain quiet at Ruheym, passed all these, amongst others our friend Izzar, the Shammar boy, who was weeping over his delúls—two out of the three were dead. All were loud in their execrations of Ambar, and one or two of Ibn Rashid himself, whom they held responsible for part of the delay. Ibn Rashid's government is less popular in the desert than in the towns, especially on account of his conduct of the Haj. He impresses the camels and men at a fixed rate, ten mejidies, and gives no compensation for losses. They say, however, that Ambar runs some risk of losing his head, when all his mismanagement becomes known at Haïl, and I confess I think he deserves it.

At last we got to the *akabah*, or ascent, where the road leads up the cliff, and here the camels lay down by scores, among the rest our beautiful camel, Amud (the pillar), so called from his great height. He was younger than the rest, except poor Shenuan, and had been out of sorts for several days past. A camel that lies down under such circumstances, seldom rises again. It is not the labour, but the want of food that kills; and unless food can be brought to the exhausted animal, he never gets strength to rise. Between five and six hundred must have perished thus to-day.

At the top of the *akabah* Meshhed Ali lay

close before us, a long line of magnificent old walls with twelve round towers, all of burnt brick, the only building appearing over them being the mosque with its cupola of burnished gold, and its four minarets. The whole was reddened by the afternoon sun, and the dome looked like a sun itself.

Through a crowd of dirty children perched on the tombs of the vast burying-ground which, on this side, stretches for some distance from the walls of the city; we approached the gate of Meshhed Ali. These disorderly ragamuffins shouted jeers and rude remarks at the pilgrims, and threw stones at our dogs, and we were glad when, turning an angle of the wall, we reached the camping ground, a short distance from the north-eastern corner of the city, and found ourselves at peace, with leisure to reflect that our pilgrimage is over.



PERSIAN PILGRIMS IN FRONT OF THE HAJ.

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CHAPTER XVI.

"Nos gaillards pélerins
Par monts, par vaux, et par chemins,
À la fin arrivèrent."—La Fontaine.

The Shrines of the Shias—Bedouin honesty—Legend of the Tower of Babel—Bagdad—Our party breaks up.

Meshhed Ali (the shrine of Ali), or Nejef as it is more correctly called, is an ideal Eastern City, standing as it does in an absolute desert and bare of all surroundings but its tombs. It is nearly square, and the circuit of its walls is broken by only one gate. These walls are of kiln-burnt brick, and date from the time of the Caliphs, and are still in excellent preservation. They are strengthened at intervals by round towers, all very massive and stately. So high are they, that they completely hide every building inside them, with the single exception of the great Mosque of Ali, whose glittering dome of gold shows like a rising sun above them.

Inside, the houses are closely packed; but there is more symmetry in their arrangement than in most Asiatic towns, as the bazaar leads in a straight line from the gate to the Mosque, which stands in the centre of the town. The shops are good, or appeared so to our eyes unused to the things of cities. I did

not myself venture far inside, as the streets were very crowded, and we did not wish to attract unnecessary notice just then at the time of the pilgrimage; but Wilfrid describes the façade of the Mosque as the richest he has seen, a mass of gold and mosaic work like some highly chased reliquary. He would not go inside for fear of offending our pilgrim friends, and left it to the rest of our party to recount the splendours of the tomb.

This tomb of Ali is held by the Shias as at least as holy as the Caaba at Mecca, and it is an article of pious belief with them that any Moslem buried within sight of the dome is certain of salvation. The consequence is that pilgrims from all parts of the Shia world, and especially from Persia, come to Nejef to die, and that immense numbers of corpses are sent there for interment. Burial fees in fact constitute the chief revenue of the place.

This city and Kerbela, where there is the sister shrine of Huseyn, are inhabited by a number of Mahometan subjects of Her Majesty, from India, who have settled in them from religious motives, but remain under the protection of the British Resident at Bagdad. They live on good terms with the Arabs, but do not mix much or intermarry with them, and retain their own language. As is natural in cities of pilgrimage, all classes are ostentatiously religious, and we were amused at listening to the devout exclamations of the blacksmith who came to shoe our horses. "Ya Ali, ya Huseyn, ya Ali, ya Moham-

med," at every stroke of the hammer. They are all, moreover, bitterly hostile to Turkish rule, having the double motive of national and religious antipathy to support them. Both Meshhed Ali and Kerbela are kept strongly garrisoned, but in spite of everything have constantly revolted within the last forty years. When we were at Meshhed, the Turkish Caimakam had four companies of infantry under his orders; and the garrison of Kerbela, the head quarters of the district, was far larger.

Kerbela, which lies fifty miles north of Meshhed Ali, is physically quite unlike its rival. It is unfortified, and instead of standing in the desert, is surrounded by palm gardens, like the towns of Nejd. It is a richer and more populous city than Meshhed, but to a traveller it is less interesting as having nothing distinctive in its appearance. The Hindieh canal, which supplies it with water from the Euphrates, makes it the centre of the most considerable agricultural district of the Bagdad pashalik. Meshhed, on the other hand, has little besides its shrine to depend on.

We were now very nearly at the end of our resources, both of money, and strength, and patience; and, without more delay than was absolutely necessary to refit our caravan, we set out for Bagdad. On the evening preceding our departure, a curious incident occurred.

A young Bedouin came to our tent and introduced himself as a Shammar from the Jezireh, one of

Faris's men whom we had met the year before on the Khabur. He hailed the "Beg" at once as brother to his master, and mentioned the incident of the loan of ten pounds made by us to Faris. This sum he offered on his own responsibility to repay us now, and, seeing that we were rather out at elbows, he pulled out the money from his sleeve and almost forced it upon us. He had been sent by Faris to buy a mare from the Montefyk, and had the purchase money with him,—he knew Faris would wish him to repay the debt. Though we would not take the money, the honesty and good feeling shown greatly pleased us, and we were glad of an opportunity to send messages to Faris, Tellál, and Rashid ibn Ali, who it appeared was still with the northern Shammar.

This same night, too, Muttlak left us. It was a grief to us to say good-bye, and he, more visibly touched even than we were, shed tears. He had found, he said, men of the Amarrat at Meshhed, who had promised to arrange his business with the Sebaa for him, and so he would go home. He had come quite two hundred miles with us, and we could not ask him to do more. He had, however, something behind the reasons which he gave us for his going; Mohammed, his cousin, had grown jealous of his position with us, and, we have reason to suspect, made things uncomfortable for the old Sheykh when we were not present, in a way we could not prevent. Besides this, there was a story of a blood-feud between the Ketherin and the Maadan, a tribe which

lives between Nejef and Kerbela; this may have helped to deter Muttlak from going on with us, for he is essentially a man of peace, but there could have been no danger for him in our company. Be it as it may, he came that night to dine with us for the last time, and could eat nothing, and when we asked him why, he said it was from sorrow, and that he must say good-bye. It was evident that he spoke the truth, and I am sure that no word of the blessings which he heaped upon our heads, and of his promises to keep our memory green in his heart, was more than what he felt. Muttlak is not a man of words. Wilfrid kissed the old Sheykh, and his servant kissed our hands, and they got on their old black delúl, and rode quietly away the way they came, and we saw them no more.

Three days of easy travelling brought us to Kerbela, for we did not care to push on fast, and four days more to Bagdad. One incident only of our route need be mentioned. As we were passing the neighbourhood of Birs Nemrud, the reputed tower of Babel, we stopped for the night at some tents belonging to the Messaoud, a half felláhín tribe of the left bank of the Euphrates, where they were growing barley on some irrigated land. The Sheykh, Hajji et-Teyma was away, but his son Fuaz entertained us, and after dinner related the history of Nimrod, the founder of the tower. Nimrod, he said, was an impious man, and thought that the sun was God. And in order to make war on him he built this tower, but finding

that he could not reach him thus, he had a platform constructed with a pole in the middle, and to each corner of the platform he chained an eagle, and on the pole he hung a sheep, and the eagles wishing to reach the sheep, flew up with the platform and Nimrod who was standing on it. And when Nimrod thought himself near enough, he shot an arrow at the sun. And God to punish him destroyed the tower. The Yezidis worship Nimrod and Shaytan there to this day.

Beyond Kerbela our road lay through cultivated land till we reached the Euphrates, which we crossed by the bridge of boats at Musseyib. Then we found ourselves among Babylonian mounds, canals, and abandoned fields, the unvarying features of Irak. These brought us at last to Bagdad, where by a strange fatality we arrived once more in floods of rain, and where, again, we were welcomed in the hospitable four walls of the Residency. On the 6th of March we slept once more in beds, having been without that luxury for almost three months.

Here, therefore, ends our pilgrimage to Nejd, which, in spite of some difficulties and some hardships, was accomplished successfully without any really disagreeable incident, and here, if we had been wise, our winter's adventures would have ended too. We had been lucky beyond our expectations in seeing and doing all we had proposed as the objects of our journey, and hardly a day of the

eighty-four we had spent in Arabia had been uninteresting or unromantic. What followed was neither profitable nor agreeable, and might well have been left undone.

At Bagdad our party necessarily broke up. Among the letters awaiting us at the Consulate, was one for Mohammed ibn Arûk which obliged his instant return to Tudmur. Great events had occurred there in his absence, and for a moment we felt a pang of regret at having kept him so long away from his duties and his interests at home. The politics of Tudmur are a little complicated. Mohammed's father, Abdallah, is not the legitimate Sheykh of the town, the true head of the Ibn Arûk family there being his cousin Faris. Abdallah, however, has for some years past enjoyed Government support, and is the Turkish nominee. The town has consequently been divided into two factions,* headed respectively by Faris and Mohammed, the latter representing his father, who is too old for such quarrels, and as long as the Turks were supreme at Tudmur, Mohammed's party had it all their own way. Not, however, that either faction wished any good to the Sultan, for during the Russian war Mohammed was one of the foremost in refusing the contingent demanded of the Tudmuri for the Turkish army, but family quarrels are fierce among the Arabs, and they take advantage of all the help they can get alike from

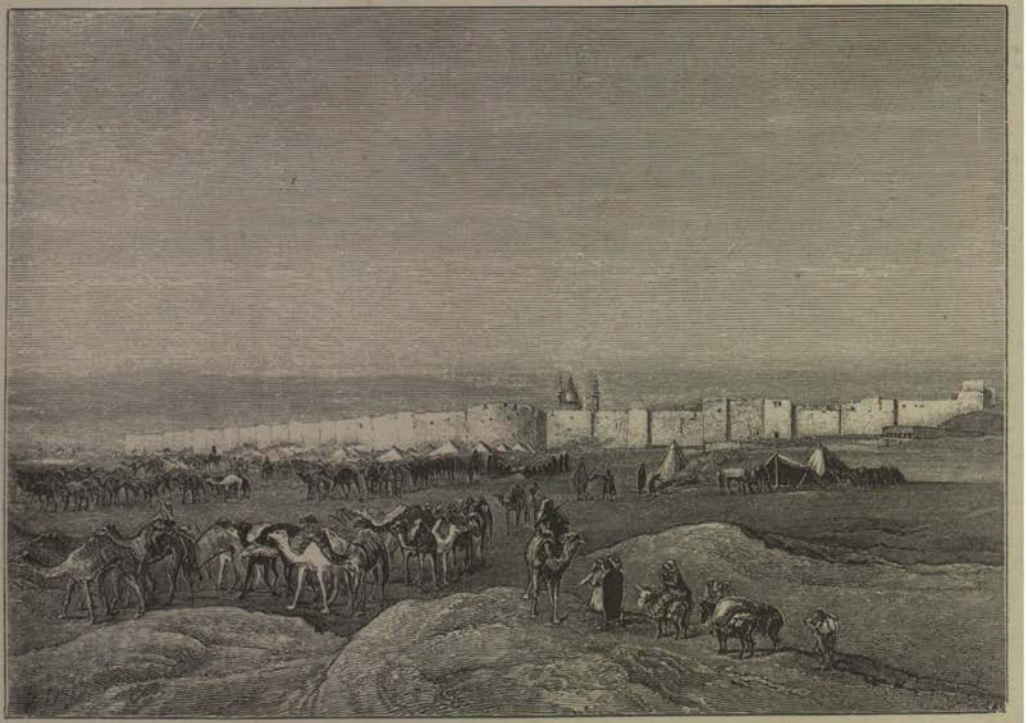
* An incomplete account of this state of things is given in "Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates."

friend or enemy. So Mohammed supported Turkish policy in his native town, and was in turn supported by the Turks. But after the surrender of Plevna, and the destruction of the Sultan's army in the Balkans, Tudmur was abandoned to its own devices, and Faris once more asserted his right to the sheykhat, though parties were so evenly balanced that nothing serious for some time occurred, and only on one occasion Faris and Mohammed exchanged shots, without serious result. It was in defiance of remonstrances on the part of his father and all his friends that Mohammed had come with us, and the moment he was gone war had broken out. A messenger, it appears, had arrived to recall him not a week after he started with us from Damascus, and now another letter announced that blood had been shed. This was sufficient reason for our journey together coming to an end, and Mohammed, though piously ready to accept accomplished facts with an "Allah kerim," was evidently in a hurry to be off. Even if we had wished it, we could not ask him to go further with us now. But we did not wish it. The episode of his foolish behaviour at Haïl, forgive it as we would, had left a certain *gêne* between us, which he was conscious of as well as ourselves, and, though he had done much since then to atone for it, we all felt that it was best to part. Still there was something mournful in his leaving us on so forlorn an errand, and he, as Arabs do, shed tears, owning that he had behaved in that

instance ungratefully to us, and protesting his devotion. We on our side made him as comfortable as we could with letters of recommendation to Valys and Consuls, whose protection he might have need of, and with what arms and ammunition we could spare. And so he and Abdallah, and Awwad the robber, went their way on four of our delúls, which we gave them for the journey, and we saw them no more.

We had hoped to induce Hanna to go on with us, for he in all our difficulties had never failed us, and with his cousin the Tawíl had helped us loyally when others had been cross or unwilling—but Hanna was home-sick, and the Tawíl would not desert him. So one day they joined a caravan of muleteers on the point of starting for Mosul, and left us with many tears and blessings; and the little army with which we had crossed the desert was finally dispersed.

Note. We heard nothing of Mohammed for nearly a year, and then heard that he was in prison. Prompted by a conscientious motive, of which those who have read thus far will need no explanation, he rendered himself liable to the action of Ottoman justice. A man of the Faris faction was found slain at Tudmur, and the relations of the deceased pointed out Mohammed's as the hand which had fired the shot. The Turks had just re-occupied the town and were anxious to make an example, so Mohammed was put in chains and sent to Deyr. There he found means to send us news of his misfortune, and Wilfrid had the satisfaction of being able to fulfil his brotherly obligation by interceding with the Pasha on his behalf, and eventually by procuring his release.



MESHHED ALI.

[*Vol. II., p.* 110.

PART II.

OUR PERSIAN CAMPAIGN.

OUR PERSIAN CAMPAIGN.

CHAPTER I.

"Duo illum sequor? In Persas."—PLAUTUS.

"Halas! diséit-elle, faut-il que je périsse sous les pattes d'une araignée, moi qui viens de me tirer des griffes d'un lion?"—FABLES D'ÉSOPE.

New plans and new preparations—We leave Bagdad for Persia—Wild boar hunting in the Wudian—A terrible accident—We travel with a holy man—Camps of the Beni Laam—An alarm.

AMONGST the letters awaiting our arrival at Bagdad, we had found an invitation from Lord and Lady Lytton to spend the summer, or part of it, with them at Simla. It seemed that this would be an opportunity, which might never again occur, of going on to India by land, a plan which might be made to include a visit to the Bactiari mountains, where our acquaintance of the pilgrimage, Ali Koli Khan, had his home. Ali had often talked to us of his father, and of a wonderful stud of thoroughbred Arabians possessed by his family, and the prospect of seeing these, and a tribe reputed to be the most powerful in Persia, was an attraction that could not be denied. He had indeed proposed to travel three

with us, and introduce us himself to his people, and if circumstances had been propitious, no doubt we might have accomplished this part of our journey comfortably enough. Unfortunately, when we took leave of the Haj at Meshhed Ali, our friend was not there for us to concert arrangements with him, nor even to wish him good-bye. He had been lost in the sandstorm, already mentioned as having occurred on the last day but one of the pilgrimage; and though before going on to Kerbela we had received news of his safety, we had no opportunity of meeting him. The consequence was that he neither came with us, nor gave us so much as a letter to his father; and in the end we started alone, a mistake we had ample reason to repent. The plan of travelling from Bagdad to India by land appeared to me of doubtful wisdom under the circumstances; but Wilfrid's thirst for exploration was not yet slaked. He argued that spring was just beginning, and a spring journey through Persia must of necessity be the most delightful thing in the world, and that we could at any moment get down to some port of the Persian Gulf, if the weather became too hot for us. Our means of transport were ready. We should find some difficulty in disposing of our camels at Bagdad, and had better make use of them; and though we were now without servants, servants might easily be found. Thus, in an evil day, and without due consideration of the difficulties and dangers which were before us, we deter-

mined to go on. A final circumstance decided the matter beyond recall. Captain Cameron, the African traveller, arrived at Bagdad, with the object of surveying a line for an Indo-Mediterranean railway from Tripoli to Bushire, and thence to the Indus, having already made the first stages of his survey; and Wilfrid now proposed to assist him in the more serious part of his undertaking. It was agreed between them that they should take different lines from Bagdad, and meet again either at Bushire or Bender Abbas, thus comparing notes as to the most practicable railway line from the Tigris to the Persian Gulf. Captain Cameron was to follow the left bank of the river as far as Amara, and then to strike across the marshy plains to Ahwas and Bender Dilam, while we should keep further east, skirting the Hamrin and Bactiari hills. So presented, the project sounded useful, if not agreeable, and acquired a definite object, which, if it ran us into unnecessary dangers, served also to carry us through them afterwards. The expedition was accordingly a settled thing.

Our preparations were made, unfortunately, with as little reflection as the decision. On arriving at Bagdad, we had, as has been mentioned, said good-bye to Mohammed and the camel-men, and had, moreover, allowed Hanna and Ibrahim, who were homesick, or tired of travelling, to depart. The difficulty now was how to replace them. It is always a dangerous experiment to begin a serious journey with untried followers, and it was our first

misfortune that we were obliged to do this. Colonel Nixon, as he had done last year, kindly lent us a cavass; but, alas! Ali, the intelligent fat man who had been of such assistance to us in our Mesopotamian tour, was not fit to leave Bagdad. He was lying ill of a fever, and could not be disturbed. The cavass given us was consequently a stranger, and might be good or bad, useful or useless, for anything we knew. It was necessary, too, that somebody should know Persian, and we engaged a Persian cook, Ramazan by name, highly recommended, but equally untried. A young Bagdadi next volunteered as groom, and, lastly, the Sheykh of the Agheyls, an old friend, sent two of his men as camel-drivers.

None, however, of these attendants, the two last excepted, had seen each other before, nor knew anything of our way of travelling or our way of life. We did not even start together, as it would have been wise to do. The country round Bagdad is bare of pasture for many miles, and we thought to better matters for our camels by sending them on some marches down the river, intending to join them later with our baggage by boat, a most unfortunate arrangement, for the men being stupid timorous fellows, seem, when left to themselves, to have lost their heads, and instead of obeying their orders, which were to travel slowly, pasturing the animals as they went, drove them without halting to the village we had named as a meeting-place, and kept them there, half-starved in dirty stables, till we

came, a piece of negligence which cost us dear. When we joined them, one, the black delúl, was already missing, dead they informed us; and a second, Shayl, a camel which, when we left Damascus, had been a model of strength and good looks, was so reduced as to be unfit for further travelling, while the remaining six were but a shadow of their former selves. Only Hatheran, the giant leader, who had saved our fortunes in the Nefûd, was still fit for a full load; and to him once more we had mainly to trust during all that was to come.

It is difficult for those who have never owned camels to imagine how much attached one becomes to these animals on a long journey, and what a variety of character they possess. Each one of ours had its name, which it knew well, and its special quality of courage, or caution, or docility. Wilfrid's white delúl, "Helweh" (sweetmeat), was gentle and obedient; the Meccan, "Hamra," thoughtless and vain; "Ghazal," affectionate, but rude and inclined to buck (poor thing, she was far from bucking now); "Hatheran," especially, was a camel of character. He was evidently proud of his strength and his superior understanding, and possessed a singular independence of opinion which compelled respect. It was his pride to march ahead of the rest, who accepted him as guide, and followed his lead on all doubtful occasions. He cared little for the beaten track, choosing his ground as seemed best to him,

and always for good reasons. He was never impatient or put out, and in difficulties never lost his head. He could carry twice the load of the others, and could walk faster, and go longer without water. At the same time, he considered himself entitled to extra rations when we made up the evening meal, and would leave us no peace till he was satisfied. I mention these things now, for feeding and driving and tending these camels was to be our chief occupation during the rest of our journey, and on them depended the safety of our march, and, in great measure, of our lives. I say it with no little vanity, that, starting under the unfavourable circumstances we did, we nevertheless marched our camels without accident five hundred miles over mountain and plain, through swamps and streams never before traversed by camels, and across nine large rivers, one of them bigger than the Rhine; and that we brought them in to their journey's end fat and well. I must not, however, forestall matters.

On the 20th of March, having thus sent on our camels with the Agheyls, we embarked on board an English river steamer, with our servants, our horses, our greyhounds, and Rasham, the falcon who had followed our march from Haïl, and were taken down about eighty miles to a point of the river below Kut, where several streams run into the Tigris from the east, thus giving the district the name of Wudian (streams).

It was a cheerless start, for all down the river we

steamed through driving rain, till at last the steamer was brought to, amid the downpour, in front of a bare round bank, and we were invited to descend. There was nothing but mud and a few bushes to be seen for miles, and it seemed impossible we should step out of the luxury of a civilised English cabin into what seemed a mere slough, and that without means of transport further than the bank, for of camels and men there was nothing at all to be seen. But the die was cast; this was the place we had agreed on, and, without more ado, we landed, first our horses and then our baggage, and then ourselves. While this was in operation, some Arabs had appeared on the scene, and to one of them, an old man in a green turban, Captain Clements, before he said good-bye, confided us. Seyd Abbas, he told us, was an old acquaintance, and an honest man; and though the rest, it was easy to see, were of the lowest order of fellahin Arabs, we were fain to be content with this assurance and make what friends we could, at least with the old man. Sitting disconsolately on our camel bags in the rain, we then made our last farewell to all on board, and having watched the steamer till it steamed out of sight, set ourselves in earnest to the work that was before us.* I resume my journal:

"The tent was soon rigged up on a piece of

* Just a year afterwards, poor Captain Clements, being in command of the Kalifeh, was attacked off Korna by an Arab ghazú, and while gallantly defending his vessel, was shot through the lungs.

sounder ground than the rest, and the horses fettered and turned out to graze. My new mare, Canora, so called after the Canora or Nebbuk tree which grows in the Residency yard, is certainly a great beauty, and attracts much, too much, attention, from the rather thievish-looking people of this place. Wilfrid has been to the encampment, which is about half a mile off, with Seyd Abbas, and has made friends with their chief people, but he has no agreeable impression of those he has seen. They appear to be, he says, a mixed collection of felláhín from all the Iraki tribes, and can lay no claim at all to good birth. Their Sheykh alone, for Seyd Abbas is not their Sheykh, claims gentility as coming from the Beni Laam, but we do not like his looks. The Beni Laam, Seyd Abbas tells us, are three days' journey from here, and there is war going on amongst them just now, owing to a quarrel between their Sheykh, Mizban, and one of his brothers. He gives rather a terrible picture of them, and has been trying to dissuade us from going further; but we think that with the letters we have for Mizban, there can be no difficulty. The Beni Laam are, at any rate, a true Bedouin tribe, not felláhín, like the people here. Old Hajji Mohammed (the cavass) stayed with me while Wilfrid was away. He was once in the army, and insisted on standing sentry in the rain in spite of all I could do to make him sit down under the flap of the tent. He has evidently small confidence in the people here.

Some fowls have been brought from the camp, and there are sticks enough to make a fire. Now we shall see what our Persian cook can do. If the camels were here, our being detained would not so much matter. We heard of them at Kut as we passed by in the steamer, but that is twenty-five miles off, and with this rain it is impossible to say when they may arrive.

March 22.—The weather has cleared, and we can see the Hamrin hills to the east, not so very far off. The country is less hideous than it seemed yesterday in the rain. This place is a sort of peninsula or island, formed by two rivers, which come from the Hamrin hills and fall into the Tigris. These seemed to be joined higher up by a canal, so that the space inside is cut off from the desert. It is partly a swamp, partly a thicket of guttub bushes, with here and there patches of cultivation made by felláhín. These call themselves Saadeh, but Seyd Abbas says they come from all parts. He himself is brother to the Sheykh of Ali Ghurbi, a village on the other side of the Tigris. There are no villages at all on this side after Kut, and this island of Wudian is the only inhabited spot. The felláhín are very poor, and complain bitterly of the government, which ruins them. They are completely under the thumb of the Turks, now that the government has steamers on the river, and the tax-gatherers take (if we may believe them), about two-thirds of their crops. They have also to pay ten beshliks (francs)

for each tent, half a beshlik for each sheep, two beshliks for each buffalo they keep, and a capitation tax of two and a half beshliks besides. Moreover, they are visited now and then by zaptiehs, who take their horses from them if they do not manage to hide them away, on the pretence that they cannot afford to keep them, while Mizban makes them pay tribute for protection too, or rather for the right of being left alone. The government does absolutely nothing in return for what it takes. They are indeed in a wretched plight, and one wonders why they take all this trouble of cultivation for so little, but perhaps it is a choice between that and starvation.

The great feature of Wudian is its wild-boars. These literally swarm in the fields, trotting about in open day-light, and doing exactly as they like. The people are afraid of them, and keep out of their way, and no wonder, for they are gigantic beasts. A man who was at our tents to-day, shewed us a terrible wound he had received from one which charged him quite without provocation. The people have only their short spears to protect themselves with. The beasts come almost inside the camp, and Wilfrid found one this afternoon fast asleep under a bush, within ten yards of the path which leads to the tents. The people passing along, went a long way round so as not to disturb it, for it lay quite exposed to view. Seyd Abbas begged him to destroy some of them, and Wilfrid has ridden out on Ariel, and taken the Winchester rifle to see what he

can do. I have felt feverish, and have stayed at home drying the things which had got wet.

The people here are all Shias, and very fanatical, and Seyd Abbas as a descendant of the Prophet enjoys a high position among them. Among the Anazeh and Shammar, the Bedouins think nothing of saints and seyyids, but here they have everybody at their feet. Bashaga, the Sheykh, though a Beni Laam and, as such, a "gentleman," is not nearly so important as the old man in the green turban. The latter has been talking to me this morning and promises to take us to Mizban's camp, if we insist on going, though he advises strongly not. He says that with him we shall be safe, as they also have a great respect for Seyyids, and besides he has married into Mizban's family. Seyyid or not, he eats and drinks with us freely; so we feel a certain amount of confidence in him.

Wilfrid has returned triumphant. He was not more than two hours and a half away, and he has killed five boars and a sow. Ariel behaved wonderfully, following the pigs without any need of urging, and without flinching when they charged. It seems to have been splendid sport. Amongst the victims was the old boar that had been seen asleep, and which charged most viciously. It is lucky the dogs were not taken, as they would certainly have got hurt. The Arabs are highly delighted at the result, and we hope it may put us on better terms with them. They have dragged one of the corpses,

a disgusting object, to the bank of the river, intending, they say, to send it to the British Resident at Bagdad by the next steamer. No news, alas, of the camels.

March 23.—A fearful storm in the night, and the whole place under water. Wilfrid went out early to try and get news of the camels, riding Job, the grey horse we bought of Col. Nixon. He did not get far, for the streams are so swollen that they are impassable, at least for one who does not know the fords; and Job is a rather timid horse to get into difficulties with. He is young, and fairly bolted when a pig jumped up from out of a bush near him. We are both going out now for some more boar-hunting. I should enjoy it better if I was sure we should ever get away from this swampy place.

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We have had a great misfortune. Ariel is badly wounded. We went out to-day, a large party, people on foot with spears and hoes, and one or two on sorry little mares. It was a beautiful day after the rain, birds singing in all the bushes, francolins calling, hoopoes flying about, and woodcocks starting from guttub thickets. The island was half under water, and droves of pigs, boars, sows and little ones, turned out of the bushes, where they generally lie in the day-time, were grunting and trotting and splashing about everywhere. We singled out a great red boar, and all gave chase, but the ground was heavier than yesterday, and we had a longish

gallop to come up to him. It was difficult, too, to keep to the boar we had chosen, where there were so many. At last he charged, and was hit, but not enough to stop though it turned him, and then we had another gallop, and another shot rolled him over. The people on foot, who were following them, rushed in, but just as they got near him up he jumped, and bolted towards some deep water, where there was a high guttub bush. I was in front, and Wilfrid shouted to me to turn him, which I would have done if I could, but instead, he turned me, coming at me with a savage grunt and a toss of his head which I knew was dangerous. Then he plunged into the deep water, but instead of going on, suddenly changed his mind, and came back to where the bush was on the land, and before we were aware, had charged right in among us. Wilfrid turned his mare, but, alas, not fast enough, firing as he turned. To my horror, I saw the hideous beast catch Ariel and give her a toss, such as I have seen in the bull-ring given by a bull. He seemed to lift horse and rider clean off the ground. Ariel staggered away, while the boar lay down, and was soon after dispatched by the Arabs.

We meanwhile had torn off our kefiyehs and scarfs, and were trying to staunch a ghastly wound in the poor mare's leg. The leg was ripped up inside from the hock to the stifle, and an artery had been cut. For a long while it was all in vain. We could not stop the flow, and no words can describe our misery as we watched the blood pouring

fast upon the ground. We were in despair, for besides the fact of her being thus precious in race, we are much attached to the mare for her own sake, as who would not be, for Ariel is the noblest and best and gentlest creature that ever was. She has a pathetic look in her eyes, and is absolutely patient under her suffering. We have now some hope of her recovery, but Wilfrid fears she must be abandoned, for the sinew is cut bare, and she cannot put her foot to the ground.

While we were engaged in tending her, suddenly the camels appeared. It would have given us immense pleasure a few hours ago. Now all seemed indifferent. Their presence, however, enabled us to bring our camp here, where the mare is.

March 24.—This certainly is an ill-starred journey. The stupid Agheyls have so neglected our camels that Abdeh is dead, and Shayl unable to go further. Nor are the rest in much better case. We had some discussion this morning about giving up our present plan, and taking the next steamer which passes by for Bussora where we could make a fresh start. This would have been the best chance of saving the mare. But we decided to push on, and accordingly we left Wudian this morning, fording the canal, which is about four feet deep, fortunately without accident, and marching slowly in a south-east direction across a perfectly level plain. Ours is a melancholy caravan, for poor Ariel walks with great difficulty, her leg being terribly swollen; but

she has such courage that we hope she may yet pull through. It was a choice of evils, bringing or leaving her; for leaving her would mean that we should never see her again. Bashaga could not be trusted with her, nor any of the Arabs of Wudian except Seyd Abbas, and he has come with us. Seyd Abbas is mounted on a sorry little white kadish, and his son Hassan, who has come too, marches on foot. Wilfrid is mounted now on Job, and Hajji Mohammed on the hamra. Thus we have travelled about ten miles. The plain is here for the most part absolutely bare alluvial soil, like that of Irak, bu mixed with saltpetre, and so producing nothing. Here and there, however, there is a swamp, with a little show of verdure, and we have encamped in the middle of a patch of thistles, the first bit of pasture we have come to. We have met no one, but there are some tents now at a distance, with camels feeding, supposed to belong to the Beni Laam. Hájji Mohammed has been to the tents, but he does not seem to know how to manage among the Bedouins, and has come back empty-handed, declaring that the owners were rude to him. We ought, I suppose, to have gone ourselves, but we are in such distress about the mare that we do not like to leave her. We have been dressing her wounds with Holloway's ointment, as she lies on her side at our tent door. The thistles are of the spotted sort, and all the animals, including Ariel, seem to enjoy them.

March 25.—We hoped that Ariel was better,

she had eaten well over-night, and though very stiff this morning, was able to start with us; but after travelling a couple of miles, she staggered and fell down, and though she got up again, she again fell. The third time she refused to move, the pain being too great, and there she lay on her side as if dead. It was useless to try to bring her further, and as we happened to be passing within half a mile of the tents we had seen yesterday, it was agreed that Hassan, Seyd Abbas' son, should stop with her and get her gradually to them, and so back to Wudian. We have promised him a handsome reward if he succeeds in recovering her and sending her back to Bagdad, and he has protested he will do everything he can. All the same, I do not doubt that we have bid good-bye to Ariel for ever. She lifted up her beautiful head as we took leave of her, and seemed to understand what was happening, for Arab horses understand things as people do. Wilfrid brought her a bucket of water, which she drank, and then she laid her head upon the ground again, and we went away.*

Travelling without her to-day has seemed unnatural. It is impossible to enjoy looking at the sunshine or the Hamrin hills, though these have been

* What became of Ariel we shall never know. At first reports came to Bagdad that she was alive and recovering; then news that she was dead; and then, when someone was sent to inquire, it was discovered that Seyd Abbas and Bashaga and all the Arabs had deserted and were gone. We hope still she may be with them.

very beautiful. We are again encamped in the open plain not ten miles from these hills, and three or four perhaps from the river, which we have been marching almost parallel with.

A new complication has arisen in the behaviour of Ramazan, the cook, who has proved so insubordinate that he is to be sent about his business. Seyd Abbas is to go to-morrow to Ali Ghurbi on the river, to make purchases of rice and dates for us, and he will take Ramazan with him, as also the groom, who declares he has got fever, caught in the Wudian swamps, and will go no further. Thus our party is melting away at the outset; but we are in the meanwhile to go on, with a young man Seyd Abbas brought with him from last night's tents, to a large camp of the Beni Laam, which is said to be just under the hills, and wait there till the Seyyid joins us.

March 26.—Four hours' march has brought us to the hills. As we got near them, we found the usual signs of a Bedouin encampment, distant flocks of sheep and then shepherds, all moving with that exaggerated, mysterious appearance of speed the mirage gives. We galloped on to reconnoitre from a tall tell in front of us, and soon made out the camp. There was a stream of water just below, and the tell and the plain near it were covered with something like turf, while the hill sides were visibly green with grass. A shepherd told us that the camp was Musa's, the sheykh we

were in search of; and, waiting till the camels came up with us, we went on there.

Musa ibn Sollal was absent, and we were directed to his brother Akul's tent. We found him fast asleep in a corner of the tent, but he woke up when we entered, and received us politely. He told us that the Sheykh had gone to Amara, at a summons from the mutesserif of that town, to meet his brother Mizban, and have their quarrel made up. It seems that Musa, Akul and Homeydi, all sons of one mother, are making war against their half-brother, Mizban, who is head of the Ibn Sollal family, as well as principal Sheykh of all the Beni Laam; and the quarrel is now a serious affair, for Mizban has killed one of Musa's sons. There can be little chance of its being patched up by Turkish intervention, for the present mutesserif is weak "like a lady," they say, and not at all the man to deal with a blood-feud.

Akul is an elderly man, with a grey beard, and devoted to children. He has been doing his best to entertain us, as well as to amuse a little group of small children who came clustering around him when he awoke. His tent is a poor one, small and hot like a stewpan; and we escaped from it the moment we could with propriety go to our own, pitched only a few yards off—too few, alas! for comfort, for the people here, though well-behaved, cannot resist their curiosity to "farraj."

These Beni Laam must be counted as true Be-

douins, as none of them are felláhín, or would lift a finger to till the ground, for which purpose they employ such low tribes as our friends the Saadeh and the Abiad. But they are quite different from any other true Bedouins I have visited, not only in manners but in looks; and there seems to be among them a great mixture of races. Seyd Abbas has told us that they intermarry with Persian and Kurdish tribes, and that they also receive and adopt into their own tribe vagabonds from no one knows where; and this account is fully borne out by their appearance. Mixed descent may be read in their faces. Neither do they, as far as I can make out, lay much claim to good breeding, except in the ruling family, Ibn Sollal, which is proud of its ancestry in the male line. Akul and his brother Homeydi, who visited us in the evening, talked a great deal about their Nejdean descent. According to their own account they (the Ibn Sollal) came from Nejd twelve generations ago; and I do not doubt the correctness of the tradition; but their Arabian blood has since become so much diluted with foreign additions, that in Nejd itself they would not be accepted as nobly born. They do not deny their marriages with the daughters of the neighbouring lands, but seem to think it a matter of no consequence. They will even marry with townspeople and Bagdadis; and we heard on board the steamer of a relative of Mizban's married to a certain Jazin Sabunji, a tradesman in

Bagdad. His brother, Ahmet Sabunji, had, on the strength of the connection, given us a letter to add to our packet of introductions to Mizban.

The horses here seem to be of small account. Fifteen or twenty mares, wearing the usual iron shackles, are grazing about a mile off, some with foals by their sides, all standing in water above their fetlocks. We walked round to examine them, and saw one good-looking white mare that may be thoroughbred, and also a bay somewhat better than the rest, but they are inferior animals. A foal was born last night, and was being removed with its mother, a wretched little creature, to the dry ground at the camp. There were no camels to be seen. They and the sheep are at pasture at a considerable distance.

A couple of Bagdad sheep-dealers have come by with a large flock just purchased from Mizban's people. Their description is glowing of the wealth and grandeur, and excellent reception to be met with at the great Sheykh's tents. They are travelling quietly, and apparently without precaution or fear of being attacked by the ghazús, so much talked about. But I suppose they know what they are doing.

Several women came to see me, accompanied by some children, two or three of whom were really beautiful, one little boy especially. Their visit soon attracted a crowd, for everybody who passed stopped to join the circle in front of our tent. They were good-humoured and rather encroaching and forward,

but kept in check by a middle-aged man with a big stick, who undertook the office of master of the ceremonies. His method was rough and ready; every now and then to effect a complete dispersion of the party by rushing into the midst of them and dealing out blows on every side without distinction of age or sex. The visitors then ran away in all directions laughing, and almost immediately returned more gay and merry than before. One young lady, Basha by name, proposed to accompany us on our journey, and my answer, "Marhaba, fetch your mare and come," brought down on her endless chaff.

A few small presents have made Musa very amiable, and he has sent us a guard for our tents. There is, it would seem, some apprehension of attack on the part of the hostile section of the tribe who are not far off, and a ghazú from Mizban is much talked of. So the conference of the two brothers at Amara does not prevent their followers from carrying on the war.

March 27.—Nothing worse happened during the night than a thunderstorm. Wilfrid started early on Job to try and find old Seyd Abbas, of whom nothing was heard yesterday. He went alone, and cantered for about ten miles in the direction of the river, but finding a large marsh between him and it, and, moreover, that Ali Ghurbi was beyond the river, he returned. He met, he tells me, a number of Arabs whom he believes to have been Mizban's people. They made some show of trying to circum-

vent him, but were too ill-mounted to be dangerous. At midday the Seyyid arrived with two donkey loads of provisions from the village. We had all but given him up for lost, and in our dearth of friends, we now begin to feel something like affection for him, seeing him return.

We have made so little progress this week that we could not consent to stay another night with Musa, and have come on, in spite of tempestuous skies and alarming rumours of a ghazú, which is said to be on the march from Mizban's. We have, however, hitherto, escaped all these dangers. The thunderstorms, though rattling like artillery, right, left, in front, and behind us, spared us overhead; and we have seen no living soul all the afternoon. It is a wild, strange piece of country, but covered in places with excellent pasture, so that we have the satisfaction of seeing our dear camels growing fat beneath our eyes. We have stopped for the night at the edge of an enormous red morass, the haunt of innumerable birds. There are two little tells close by, and a pool of rain water good to drink. We have now left the neighbourhood of the Tigris for good, so that these swamps have nothing to do with it. They seem to be caused by small streams running from the Hamrin Hills, and caught in this great flat plain. The railway, in Wilfrid's opinion, if it is ever made, ought to run along the foot of the hills where the ground is sounder. It is difficult, however, to ima-

gine the use of a railway in such an uninhabited country.

The tells where we are, are called Doheyleh; but there is nothing in the shape of a village anywhere this side the Tigris, nor are there any Bedouins except these Beni Laam.

March 28.—A good morning's march has brought us safely to Mizban's. It seems that after all we ran some danger last night, for a ghazú was really out between the two Beni Laam camps, and we find Mizban's people in commotion. A few miles from the camp we were met by a body of horsemen advancing in open order, who, as soon as they saw us, galloped at full speed towards us, and seemed as if intending to attack. But Seyd Abbas rode forward to meet them on his old grey kadish and waved his cloak and shouted to them to stop. "It is I," he called, "Seyd Abbas." Whereupon the horsemen pulled up, and dismounting, kissed the old man's hand. They were a ghazú, they told us, from Lazim, Mizban's eldest son, and they were following on the track of some robbers from Musa's, who had carried off seventeen camels in the night. They cross-questioned Seyd Abbas as to Musa's whereabouts, but the old man would not let out the secret. It would have been a breach of the hospitality he had just received from Musa. They did not stop long, however, to talk, but went on their way, leaving a couple of the party only to show us to Mizban's tent.

The tents of the Beni Laam are peculiar. Instead of being, like every other Arab tent we have seen, set on a number of poles each of different height, these are shaped like regular pent-houses, with gable roof and walls. Such, at least, is Mizban's *mudíf*, a construction corresponding with the *kahwah* of a town house, and used only for reception. The living tents are smaller, and the word *beyt* house here applies only to the harim. The mudíf is a fine airy room, very pleasant in the hot weather we are beginning to have. It is pitched close to the river Tibb in the middle of a very large camp, several hundred tents, and looks imposing enough. The country all round is very bare and trodden down, having been exposed last night to a fearful hail storm, which has wrecked all the vegetation. The hailstones, they say, were as big as dates.

The Tibb is much swollen, and flowing through a deép cutting, looks anything but easy to cross,—a turbid yellow river cutting its way through the alluvial plain without valley of any sort, so that you do not know it is there until you come close to it. It is about fifty yards wide.

At the door of the mudíf we alighted, and presently made the acquaintance of our host—not Mizban, for he, as we heard before, is away at Amara, but his son Beneyeh—a rather handsome but not quite agreeable looking youth, whose forward, almost rude manners show him to be, what he no doubt is, a spoilt child. We have been

rather reserved with him in consequence, and have left to Hajji Mohammed the task of explaining our name and quality, and delivering the letters which we have with us for his father. Beneyeh is not the eldest son, and I do not quite understand why he does the honours of his father's tent instead of Lazim. It is difficult to know exactly how to treat him; but we think it better to be on the side of politeness, so we have sent him the cloak intended for the Sheykh, and have added to it a revolver, with which he seems pleased. We are so completely in his hands for our further progress, that we must do what we can to secure his good will. I have paid a visit to the harim, and have been well received by Beneyeh's mother, Yeddi, a fat jovial person, young-looking for her age. She is very proud of her son, and the evident cause of his spoiling. Her step-daughter Hukma, and daughter-in-law Rasi, are both rather pretty; though the latter, like the mother-in-law, shows signs of foreign blood, being inclined to fat, and being red-haired and fair complexioned. The occasion of my visit to them was a distressing one. We had hardly retired to our own tent when a loud explosion was heard, and immediately afterwards a man came running to us to beg us to come, for an accident had happened. In the storm last night some gunpowder belonging to Beneyeh had got wet, and a slave had been set to dry it at the fire in the women's tent, with the result of a blow up and fearful burning of the unfortunate creature. They

wanted us, of course, to cure him; and we gave what advice we could, but with little chance of success. The poor slave lay groaning there behind a matting all the time I was in the tent, but Yeddi and the rest chattered, and laughed, and screamed, regardless as children. Sick people get little peace in the Desert.

* * * * *

Wilfrid believes he has arranged matters with Beneyeh, who came to dine with us this evening, and talked matters over afterwards with Seyd Abbas He declared at first that a journey across the frontier into Persia was out of the question, that nobody had ever been that way, that the Beni Laam were at war with the Ajjem (Persians) and could not venture into the neighbourhood of Dizful, or any town of Persia, and that his father was away, and he had no men to spare as escort. After much talking, however, and persuasion on the Seyyid's part, he has agreed to start with us to-morrow with thirty horsemen and see us safely to the camp of one Kerim Khan, chief of a Kurdish tribe, which lives on the river Karkería, beyond which Persia proper begins, and that he will take £10 for his trouble. The sum is hardly excessive if he fulfils his part of the bargain, for the country between Turkey and Persia has the reputation of being quite impracticable, not only from the robber bands which inhabit it, but from the rivers which must be crossed. Hajji Mohammed is very gloomy about the whole matter.

In the middle of our conversation a fearful hubbub arose in the camp round, followed by some shots and the galloping of horses, and Beneyeh exclaiming, "A ghazú, a ghazú!" jumped up and rushed out of the tent. Our first thought was to put out the candle, and our second to stand to our arms and look outside. In the dim starlight we could see what seemed to be a fight going on inside and round the mudíf; and though night attacks are very unusual in the desert, we were convinced an enemy was sacking the camp. Though the quarrel was no affair of ours, and we should probably be in little danger had it been daylight, now in the darkness we could not help feeling alarmed. Wilfrid served out cartridges, and gave the order that all should kneel down so as to be prepared for action if the tide of battle should come our way, an arrangement which resulted only in Hajji Mohammed's letting off his gun by accident, and very nearly shooting one of the Agheyls. The mares had their iron fetters on, and with the keys in our pockets we knew they could not be lost. Still it was an anxious moment. At the end of a quarter of an hour, however, Beneyeh came back in great excitement to say that a ghazú had come from Musa's, and that some camels had been driven away; that the hubbub in the tent was not fighting, but preparation to fight; and that he was come to borrow a rifle as he and his friends were starting in pursuit. Wilfrid gave him one of the guns and offered to ride with him on

his expedition, but Seyd Abbas, who had all the time been cheering us with an assurance that "it was not our affair," would not hear of this; and, after a long discussion, it was decided that we should all stay together, as indeed is only prudent. I do not believe the ghazú has been anything very serious; for, though Beneyeh and some of his men have galloped off in the supposed direction of the enemy, by far the greater number have remained, preferring shouting and singing to actual fighting. They are now chaunting in chorus "Aduan—Mizban (enemies—Mizban)—Aduan—Mizban," and striking their spears on the ground to beat time. A great fire has been lit and is blazing in the mudíf, and the dark figures passing and repassing in front of it make the whole thing wild and savage in the extreme.



ARIEL, AN ÁNAZEH MARE.

CHAPTER II.

Gloucester.] "'Tis true that we are in great danger,
The greater therefore should our courage be."
SHAKESPEARE.

"La plus mauvaise rencontre dans le désert est celle de l'homme."
GUARMANI.

We are betrayed into the hands of robbers—Ghafil and Saadun—We diplomatise—A march across "No-man's-land"—Night terrors—We claim protection of a Persian prince.

March 29.—The event of last night, though in truth it was less alarming than it seemed, made us anxious not to remain longer at Mizban's than could be helped. Wilfrid accordingly no sooner saw Beneyeh this morning, than he began to urge our departure on him, as it had been arranged over-night. The young man was in a bad humour, his pursuit of the ghazú having been either unsuccessful, or, as we suspect, never seriously made; and at first he would hear of nothing but that we should go back to Amara, instead of crossing the frontier, which he again declared to be impracticable. He was put out, moreover, because we did not allow him to keep the gun which he had borrowed in the night; and but for old Seyd Abbas, whom he is bound to treat with respect, I doubt if he would have kept to his bargain with us. I begin

to regret now that he at last allowed himself to be persuaded, for we seem to have got into a very awkward pass.

Our troubles to-day began early. First of all we had to say farewell to Seyd Abbas, our last connecting link with respectability. The old man said he dared not go further; that in the country where we were going his condition as a seyyid would not be respected, nor could he do more for us than wish us well through it. He washed his hands, in fact, of the whole proceeding, and protested that he had gone farther than he ought in bringing us thus far. We could not indeed find fault with him for wishing to return, and thanking him heartily for all, and so recommending him once more to see to Ariel, we let him go. Since then all has gone wrong. We had first the river to cross, a not very easy proceeding, for the banks were of mud, and the water up to our horses' shoulders. Still, nothing untoward happened till we had all got over. Then the two Agheyls, our camel-drivers, declared that they too would go no further. The journey into Persia frightened them, they said, as well as Seyd Abbas, and though they gave a variety of reasons besides, it always came back to this, that they did not like to die in a foreign land. It was no use arguing with them that they should not die, and that we would provide handsomely for their return to Bagdad by sea; no offers could move them, nor even the threat of their Sheykh's displeasure, which we held *in terrorem*

over them. It was impossible to be really angry, yet our case is a forlorn one without them. To-day we and Hajji Mohammed have had to load and drive the camels ourselves, for he is the only servant left us, and Beneyeh and his Arabs would do nothing, contenting themselves with galloping about and shouting out their unasked-for advice. It was very annoying.

Beneyeh's manner has changed alarmingly. Finding us practically in his power, now we have crossed the Tibb and cannot retreat, he has become most insolent, trying all day to pick a quarrel with us about the revolver we gave him, and which he has put out of order by his clumsiness, and asking for one thing and another belonging to us exactly like a rude, ill-bred child. Wilfrid was obliged to speak sharply to him and bid him be ashamed of himself, as his manners are those of an Iraki fellah, not of a Sheykh's son. Still he went on, now asking for Wilfrid's sword, now proposing to buy my mare, impertinences both, till, on being told he was a fool, he rode on in a huff with his men. There were nine of them, and one only remained with us, an older man who seemed ashamed of his young chief, and with whom we got on more pleasantly. Still it is a disagreeable prospect to have to travel with such rascals all the way to Persia. The party are tolerably mounted, the Beni Laam having a few asil mares, principally of the Wadnan breed, and at Mizban's

camp there was a horse which they called a Nusban, a name new to us.

The country, after passing the Tibb, is a fine rolling down, with capital pasture in the hollows, so that to our other difficulties we are fortunately spared that of anxiety about our camels. It is worth something to see them feeding on rich green grass as they go, making up at last for their long winter's fast.

At two o'clock we sighted some tents, where we found Beneyeh with his men, waiting for a dinner of lamb which was being prepared. Hungry as we were, we should have much preferred passing on unfeasted, for we are now suspicious of our host, and feel anxious when away from our horses. Still there was no refusing, or seeming to doubt or be afraid, and we joined with as good a grace as we could in the rather rude entertainment. The meal lasted upwards of an hour, and when we were ready to start there were still delays, so that it was dark before we reached the camp which was to be our resting-place for the night. The late rains have put much of the low-lying country under water, and we are now in a broad valley, formerly, one may guess, a rich agricultural district, but long deserted. We passed about sunset the mounds of an ancient city, which are not marked on any of our maps, and which the people here call Jeréysiat; and near these we came upon the camp where we now are.

What its inhabitants are we do not yet know.

Dakher, the chief man, is, it would seem, a Beni Laam, but the rest have more the appearance of outlaws than of respectable Bedouins. They have the most evil countenances of any people we have met on any of our travels, and Hajji Mohammed says roundly they are Kurdish robbers. Dakher and his brother Ghafil look capable of any treachery. They have a soft manner, with great flabby faces, and a black look in their eyes, which, with their rows of glittering white teeth, give one a shudder. They received us at first with some show of hospitality in their "mudif," which was a large one; but though a fire of logs was blazing in the middle, and pots were standing round, nobody gave us coffee, a very disagreeable omen; and when I asked just now for water, they would not bring it me in one of their own pans, but took ours. They are Shias, probably, and rude on principle. We have pitched our tent the best way we could in the dark, and piled up all our luggage inside, for every man here looks like a thief—I might say like a murderer.

March 30.—Last night, before we lay down to sleep, Beneyeh came to our tent with Dakher, and began bullying again and begging, but Wilfrid would give him nothing except the sum of £10 agreed on, for which he promised, and Dakher promised, that thirty khayal should go on with us to Dizful, a distance of about ninety miles. Beneyeh himself refused to go, saying that Ajjem (Persia) was not

his country, but Dakher should go for him, or Ghafil. This was a distinct breach of agreement, but we were only too pleased to get rid of him, and Wilfrid, after some show of expostulation, accepted the substitute. Then Beneyeh made a pretence of writing letters to certain khans or chiefs of the frontier tribes, but I suspect these are not worth much, for having no seal of his own with him, the young jackanapes signed the letters with a seal lent him by a bystander, an irregular and rather suspicious proceeding, but we made no remark, being thankful at any price to be freed from his company. With the grimace of one who has played a successful trick he pocketed the money, and then, without saying good-bye, mounted and rode off, our only friend, the middle-aged man, to our sorrow following him.

We were now left alone with Dakher and his crew, who sat round us while with infinite labour we loaded our camels. Poor old Hajji Mohammed in his rusty uniform, with his sword dangling between his legs, was anything but an efficient camel-man, and in spite of the best will in the world things proceeded slowly. It was as much as we could get out of Dakher that he should tell one of his sulky fellows to lend an occasional hand to the work, and keep the rest from getting in our way. The help was given grudgingly, and in obedience rather to Wilfrid's command, for he was now obliged to talk loud, than of good-will. Dakher, however,

kept up a semblance of politeness, being still our host, a position sacred even in the eyes of the most abandoned, and when his brother Ghafil appeared, announcing himself as our escort, we were suffered to depart.

Once on our horses, and with the camels driven in front of us, we felt more at ease ; yet all were not a little anxious. We should, I think, have turned back now but for the recollection of Beneych and the river Tibb behind us, evils we knew of while the unknown evils before us seemed preferable. For a while, too, we flattered ourselves with the idea that Ghafil was to be our only company, and for a mile or two the illusion lasted, and we were reassured. There is something, besides, in a very bright morning's march through a beautiful country, for we were close to the hills, which prevents one feeling anxious, and whatever its inhabitants may be, this frontier-land of Persia looks like a Garden of Eden, with its grass and flowers knee deep in every hollow.

Ghafil is another and a worse edition of Dakher, having, over and above his brother's vices of countenance, a most abominable squint. His face looks always like a thunder-cloud, and the smiles on it (for he smiles sometimes, showing a wonderful set of white teeth from ear to ear) are like the smiles of a wild beast. He has, too, a sort of cat's manner, soft and cowardly, but very offensive. At starting, and as long as he was alone with us, he

seemed amiable enough, but at the end of about an hour we came up with the rest of the party in whose company we were to travel, and then his demeanour changed. These were not horsemen, or an escort at all, but a collection of the most extraordinary vagabonds we have ever seen. There were about forty of them, with about twice as many beasts, camels, and oxen, which they were driving before them loaded with empty sacks. Amongst them were two women on foot, and there was a single horseman heading the procession, mounted on a little white mare. We asked them where they were going, and they answered, "To Dizful, to buy corn," and then in return plied us with a hundred questions. Many of these were not a little impertinent, but by parrying some, and affecting not to understand the rest, we managed to hold our own, even returning some of their small wit with interest on themselves. Hajji Mohammed, however, poor man, was soon singled out as a special butt for their mirth. His old uniform coat they found supremely absurd, and he was as mercilessly chaffed about his tailor as if he had been amongst a party of roughs on the Epsom Downs, while he had not the sense always to keep his temper. There was, besides, something more than mere high spirits in their wit. He was a Suni, and they were Shias, and religious bitterness made them bitter. From words at last they seemed rapidly coming to blows, when Wilfrid interfered, making his

horse curvet amongst them, and dispersing them for a while. But they soon returned, and it was all we could do to prevent the poor cavass from being maltreated. One called on him to dismount and give him a ride, another to let him have a shot with his gun, and a third to fill him a pipe of tobacco, to none of which demands the unfortunate Hajji knew how to give the proper refusal. "Ya Hajji," "Ya Hajji," was the perpetual cry all the morning long; "Where is your pipe? where is your tobacco? Quick, I am thirsting for a smoke." Ghafil in the meanwhile would do nothing or could do nothing in the way of control, sitting on his camel gloomily in silence, or talking in an undertone with a great one-eyed rascal, more villainously hideous than himself. The position was often almost unbearable, and only the doctrine of patience which we had learned in Arabia, and a constant show of good humour to the crowd, made it tolerable. In the course of the afternoon, however, we managed to get upon some sort of friendly terms with two or three of the rabble, so that by the evening, when we stopped, we had established a little party among them in our favour. This, I believe, was the means of preventing a worse disaster, for it is nearly certain that Ghafil and the more serious of the party meant us deliberate mischief.

About an hour before sunset we came to a broad river, broader and deeper than the Tibb, and here Ghafil decreed a halt. If we had been a strong

enough party to shift for ourselves, and if we could have crossed the river alone, we should now have gone on and left our persecutors behind; but in our helpless state this was impossible, and we had no choice but to dismount. It was an anxious moment, but I think we did what was wisest in showing no sign of distrust, and we had no sooner stopped than we gave one a horse to hold, and another a gun, while we called on others to help us unload the camels, and get out coffee and provisions for a general feast. This seemed to most of them too good an offer to be declined, and we had already distributed a sack of flour and a sack of rice amongst them, which the two women had promised to bake into loaves for the whole party, when Ghafil and the one-eyed man, who had been down to look for a ford, arrived upon the scene. They were both very angry when they saw the turn things had taken, and were at first for forbidding the people to eat with us, alleging that we were kaffirs (infidels), so at least the people informed us later, but this was more than they could insist on. They would not, however, themselves eat with us or taste our coffee, and remained apart with those of the party which had not made friends with us. The women were on our side, and the better sort of the young men. Still it was a terribly anxious evening, for even our friends were as capricious as the winds, and seemed always on the point of picking an open quarrel. Later, they all went

away and left us to our own devices, sitting round a great bonfire of brushwood they had built up, "to scare away lions," they said. We managed to rig up our tent, and make a barricade of the camel-bags in such a way that we could not be surprised and taken at a disadvantage. I did not shut my eyes all night, but lay watching the bonfire, with my hand on my gun. Hajji Mohammed once in the darkness crept out and got near enough to overhear something of their talk, and he assures us that there was a regular debate as to whether and when and how we should be murdered, in which the principal advocate of extreme measures was the one-eyed man, a great powerful ruffian who carried a sort of club, which he told us he used to frighten the lions, beating it on the ground. The noise, he declared, sounded like a gun and drove them away. With this tale of horror Hajji Mohammed returned to comfort us; nor was it wholly a delusion, for in the middle of the night, Wilfrid being asleep, and Hajji Mohammed, whose watch it was, having fallen into a doze, I distinctly saw Ghafil, who had previously come under pretext of lions or robbers to reconnoitre, prowl stealthily round, and seeing us all as he thought asleep, lift up the flap of the tent and creep under on Wilfrid's side. I had remained motionless, and from where I lay I could see his figure plainly against the sky. As he stooped I called out in a loud voice, "Who goes there?" and at the sound he started back, and

slunk away. This woke Hajji Mohammed, and nobody slept again, but I could see Ghafil prowling like an hyæna round us the best part of the night.*

Hajji Mohammed has behaved very well, though he owns himself much frightened. So am I, only I conceal my alarm better than he does. Indeed I am sure that putting on a bold face is our only chance of safety, for nothing but cowardice now prevents Ghafil and his set from attacking us. We are well armed, and he knows he could not do it with impunity. As long as we are on horseback, I believe we run no great risk, but the night is a disagreeable time. If we had only open desert in front of us we could set them all at defiance.

March 31.—The morning broke tempestuously, and we were afraid the river might have risen in the night, a complication which would have probably decided our fate; but though the clouds lay black and heavy on the hills there was no flood. After trying several places, all of which proved too deep, our akid, the man on the white mare, found a ford, if such it can be called, for the water was over his mare's back, and all the party followed him. The robbers, for so I now call them, passed easily enough, for their camels were unloaded, but ours barely managed it. The current was very strong, and though Hatheran and the strongest of them came on boldly, two of them stopped in the middle

* This part of the journal was written at irregular moments when order was not possible. It has been pieced together since.

and seemed on the point of turning down and being swept away, when Wilfrid rode back below them, into the deep water, and drove them on. It was nervous work to watch them, seeing nothing of rider and horse but their heads, but Job swam very well, and the camels were saved and all got safely over. This incident proved a fortunate one, for it impressed the better sort of the robbers with an idea of our determination, and there was again a party in our favour. It was fortunate that it was so, for we were no sooner across than Ghafil and the one-eyed monster, Saadun, came forward with a more menacing manner than they had yet dared to show, and said we should proceed no further. It was plain enough what they meant, but we affected not to understand them, and declaring in a cheerful tone that it was a charming spot to stay in, with plenty of grass and water for the beasts, at once consented to a halt. Wilfrid begged Ghafil to sit down and smoke a pipe with him, and when the man sulkily demurred, insisted on it. "Now, Ghafil," he said, "here you are my guest, as we have been yours; what can I do for you to make you happy?" "Wallah, ya Beg," interposed Saadun, "you have done nothing for him or any of us, and now you must." "Must? Indeed, I shall be too delighted. Tell me only in what I can assist you—what it is that Ghafil wants." Ghafil then began a long history about his dignity as Sheykh of the expedition, and the disgrace it was to him to have

received no cloak of honour from the Beg, and the insult that he had thus received from us—at all which Wilfrid expressed the greatest possible pain and surprise.* "There has been some mistake here," he said; "I would not for the world that anyone should be treated with less respect than was his due by me. The disgrace would be mine;" and he made a show of taking off his own cloak to give him; still Ghafil seemed dissatisfied. "No, no, it is not that," said Saadun, in a stage whisper, "what the Sheykh wants is money—money, do you see?—money for all of us." "And is it possible," exclaimed Wilfrid, "that you have all remained unpaid?—that Beneyeh gave you nothing of what he received from me?—that you have been working for me, 'balash,' for nothing? This is indeed a disgrace. Come, Saadun, let us talk this matter over and repair the mistake." He then took the one-eyed man by the arm and led him aside for a private conference, while Ghafil sat on gloomily with me. Wilfrid's first care, when he got the Kurd alone, was to square him with a present of ten krans (francs) for his own account, and a promise of twenty more when we got to the Kerkha, judging rightly that this fellow was in fact our most dangerous enemy. Then he intrusted him with negociating the rest of the black mail with Ghafil. We were prepared now for

* We trust this duplicity may be pardoned us in consideration of the straits we were in.

almost any demand, for we were completely in their power, and had a sum of nearly £100 with us, besides property to the value of perhaps as much more. We were consequently no little relieved when Saadun returned with a demand of one hundred krans, and a silk abba, in return for Ghafil's protection. This, after much affected reluctance to part with so enormous a sum, and a declaration at one moment that rather than pay we would stay where we were for a month, we at last produced—giving the robber the very silk abba which had been one of Ibn Rashid's presents to us in Nejd—a white silk one, embroidered with gold, but the only one we had; which being done we were suffered to proceed. The truth of the matter probably is that Ghafil dared not drive us to extremities, partly from physical fear, for we soon had proof sufficient of his cowardice, and partly because many of his men would not have joined him in a deed of violence. Bloodshed is a thing no Arab willingly consents to, however low his morality, especially where a guest, or one who has been a guest, is in question; and though the mongrel Kurds and Persians, who made up more than half the band, would have abetted him, the rest would not. One of the women, too, was Ghafil's wife, and the women were openly friends with us. Another consideration may have been that we were entering now upon an enemy's country, for the Dueri is the limit of Beni Laam authority, and our men were too miserable

cowards not to count upon us for something in case of attack. Part of our agreement with Ghafil was that we were to fight for him in case of need against the Persians, a promise we readily gave. The atmosphere now was somewhat cleared, and we started afresh under rather better conditions. The teasing of Hajji Mohammed continued, but we ourselves were treated with respect, and the one-eyed Kurd even occasionally lent a hand in driving the camels, in company with a youth clothed in green, who had hitherto been one of our worst persecutors.

The whole party proceeded cautiously, avowing without the slightest shame their immense fear of the Ajjem (the Persians), whom they expected to meet at every turn of the road. Beyond the Dueri we found ourselves in a beaten track, which winds up and down over an undulating bit of desert, the last ripple of the Hamrin hills which are now behind us. The akid usually rode on in front to spy out possible enemies, and all had orders to keep together. Ours, however, was such a noisy party, that one would have thought its passage could have been heard for miles round. The bullocks were getting tired and required a great deal of driving, and the shouting and screaming reminded one of an Irish fair. So we went on without a halt till three o'clock, when a halt was ordered in a hollow, where we were out of sight of enemies, and where there was a quantity of wild celery, and another edible

plant called "hakallah," which we found good, for we had eaten nothing all day. Not far off were some sand mounds, with tufts of what looked very like ithel, but we dared not leave our camels to inspect them. The halt was only for half-an-hour; then with shouts of "Yalla yalla, erkob, erkob," the mob went on.

We stopped again suddenly about an hour before sunset, and this time in alarm. The akid, who had ridden to the top of a low hill, was seen waving, as he came back, his abba, and instantly the cry arose, "El Ajjem, el Ajjem." In an instant everybody was huddled together in a hollow place, like a covey of partridges when they see a hawk, and we were entreated, commanded to dismount. A few hurried words with the akid confirmed the terrible news of danger to the band, and all seemed at their wits' end with terror. "How many horsemen?—how many?" we inquired. "Five," was the answer, "but there are more behind; and then these are the *Ajjem!*" "And if they *are* the Ajjem, and only five of them, are you not forty of you here and able to fight?" "No, no!" they screamed, "you do not understand. These horsemen are Persians—Persians; every one of them capable of killing five of us." I did not think men could be so craven-hearted. A few of the least cowardly now crept up to the hill-top and one by one came back to report; the number of horsemen seen rose rapidly from five to fifteen and even-

tually to fifty. When the last number was reached, the coward Ghafil, who had kept well in the middle of the mob, so as to be in the least possible danger, came to us with his softest and most cringing manner, forgetful of all his bullying, and begged us to be sure and do our best in the battle which was imminent. "You should stand in front of the others," he said, "and shoot as fast as you can, and straight, so as to kill these Ajjem—dead you understand—it is better to shoot them dead. You, khatún, know how to shoot, I am sure—and you will not be afraid." We could not help laughing at him, which shocked him dreadfully. Presently a man came rushing up to say the enemy was coming, and again there was unutterable confusion. The boy in green had begged some percussion caps of Wilfrid for his gun, and had been given fifty, and this now led to a wrangle, as he refused to share his prize with the rest. Everybody was trying to borrow everybody else's gun or spear or bludgeon, for they were very rudely armed, and nobody would stand in front, but everybody behind. The women alone seemed to have got their heads, while Ghafil, white in the face, walked nervously up and down. We and the cavass stood a little apart from the rest, holding our horses, ready to fire and mount, and Wilfrid occupied the interval of expectation with giving me instructions what to do if we got separated in the fray. I was too well mounted to be overtaken, and was to make for the Kerkha

river, which we knew could not be far away to the east, and put myself under the protection of the first Persian khan I should meet there; if possible, Kerim Khan, to whom I had a letter in my pocket, and who is a vakil of the Persian Government. We hoped, however, that we might be able to keep together, and beat off the enemy. Wilfrid called out to Ghafil, "You must tell me when to fire," but Ghafil was too frightened to reply. Several of the men, however, called out, "Shoot at anybody you see—everybody here is an enemy." The camels had been made to kneel down, and the cattle had been huddled together; only a few of all the mob looked as if they really meant to fight. They were silent enough now, talking only in whispers. So we remained perhaps for half-an-hour; then somebody ran up the hill again to look, and Wilfrid, tired of waiting, proposed that we should eat our dinner, as we had had nothing all day. I got some bread and a pomegranate out of the delúl bag, and we were soon at work, much to the disgust of the rest, who were shocked at our levity in such a moment. Presently there was another alarm and the people called to me to come inside their square, meaning kindly I think, but of course we would do no such thing, being really much safer where we were with our mares. Still no enemy came, and when we had finished our meal we tied our horses' halters to our arms and lay down in our cloaks; we were very tired and soon were sound

asleep. Nothing more was heard of the enemy that night.

But our troubles were not to end here. We were hardly comfortably asleep, before a tremendous crash of thunder roused us and a downpour of rain. On putting our heads out of our cloaks we saw our valiant escort rigging up our servants' tent for themselves. They were terribly afraid of getting washed in the rain, and were shrieking to us to come inside too, indignant at Wilfrid's "ma yukhalif" ("never mind"), with which he had already treated their remonstrances on other occasions. Indeed, "ma yukhalif" had now become a sort of nickname with them, and no dishonourable one, I think, for the person concerned. We neither of us could think of joining them in the tent, but having managed to get a couple of horse-rugs from the delúl bag, we covered ourselves over again and went to sleep; Sayad and Shiekha creeping in under them to keep us company. All of a sudden the rain stopped, and before we were well aware, the mob was again on the march. It was pitch dark, and we were within an ace of being left behind, a circumstance which perhaps we should have hardly regretted. Still, now we felt that our position with the robbers was such, that we ran less danger in their company than alone; and we all hurried on together. Ghafil was polite again; and the rest, feeling, I suppose, that the journey was nearly over, and their power over us

vanishing, even made us offers of assistance. A long, weary night march we had, and at dawn found ourselves descending rapidly into a broad plain, knee deep in pasture. This was the valley of the Kerkha; and as it grew light we became aware of a long line of mounds, with two kubbrs or shrines in front of us, which Ghafil told us were the ruins of Eywan. At seven o'clock we saw tents within the circuit of the ancient city, and some shepherds in conical felt caps, and sheepskin dresses, the costume of the Bactiari and other tribes of Kurdish origin. We were in Persia.

Ghafil now went forward to announce our arrival to Sirdal Khan, the chieftain at whose tents we now are. But I must leave further details for to-morrow.



CANORA.

CHAPTER III.

"Henceforth in safe assurance may ye rest,
Having both found a new friend you to aid,
And lost an old foe that did you molest,
Better new friend than an old foe is said."

FAERY QUEEN.

A prince in exile—Tea money—Rafts on the Kerkha—Last words with the Beni Laam—Kerim Khan—Beautiful Persia—We arrive at Dizful.

SIRDAL KHAN is a Shahzade, or member of the Royal family of Persia, many of whom are to be found living in official, and even private capacities in different parts of the kingdom. He himself had fallen into disgrace with the Court many years ago, and had been exiled from Persia proper, a misfortune which led to his taking up his residence with a section of the semi-dependent Seguand tribe of Lurs, where he became Khan or Chieftain. Both in looks and in manner, he stands in striking contrast with the people round him, having the handsome, regular features, long nose and melancholy, almond-shaped eyes of the family of the Shah, which, I believe, is not of Persian origin, and a certain dignity of bearing very different from the rude want of manners of the Lurs. These would seem to be of Tartar origin, coarse-featured, short-faced men, honest in their way and brave, but

quite ignorant of those graces of address which even the worst Arabs are not wholly without. Sirdal, when he arrived among the Lurs, was possessed of considerable wealth, which he invested in flocks and herds, and until a short time before our visit he was living in Bedouin magnificence. But his enemies it would seem still pursued him, and not satisfied with his disgrace, molested him even in his exile. By some means, the rights of which we did not learn, they managed to instigate against him a rival chief, one Kerim Khan, who, under Government sanction, made a successful raid upon his flocks, stripping the unfortunate prince of everything, and driving him and his tribe across the Kerkha river into the No Man's Land, which lies between Persia and Turkey, and which we had just crossed. In this position he has been obliged to maintain himself as he could, making terms with Mizban and the Beni Laam, who are his nearest neighbours westwards. The river Kerkha is considered the boundary of Persia, and as it is a large and rapid river, nearly half a mile across, he is in comparative safety from the east. Ghafil, therefore, as a Beni Laam, was on friendly terms with him, though it was easy to see that he despised and had no kind of sympathy with him or the ruffians of his band. By Hajji Mohammed's advice, and to secure ourselves against further risks at their hands, we accordingly placed ourselves at once under the Khan's protection. Hajji Mohammed fortunately

knows both Persian and Kurdish, and soon explained to Sirdal the circumstances of our position, and he, delighted to meet once more with respectable people, readily assented. He received us with great kindness, made us comfortable in his tent, which, in spite of his poverty, was still more luxurious than any found among the Arabs; having partitions of matting worked in worsted with birds and beasts, carpets, and a fire, and gave us what we were much in want of, an excellent breakfast of well served rice and lamb. Then, when we had pitched our own tent just outside, he provided us with an efficient guard of Lurs, who soon sent our robber acquaintance of the last few days about their business. There is no love lost between them and the Arabs. Presently I received a visit from the Khan's wife, whom he has lately married, and his mother, a well-bred person with perfect manners, and a refined, pleasing face. She was in black, in mourning she explained for a son; she has five sons, including the Khan, whose brothers live with him. A crowd of Seguand ladies came in her company, and an Arab woman who had been nurse to one of the Khan's children, and who served me as interpreter. Ghafil's wife, too, one of the poor women who had travelled with us, came in and joined the conversation. She is loud in her complaints of Ghafil, who treats her ill. He is now very polite and presented himself during the after-

noon at our tent as if nothing had happened, with a little girl named Norah in his arms whom he told us was his niece, he having a sister here married to one of Sirdal's men. I had a carpet spread for the ladies outside our tent, for it could not have held them all, and they sat round me for an hour or more, curious and enquiring, but exceedingly polite. They admired especially my boots and gloves, which I pulled off to show them. One of them, turning up my sleeve, exclaimed at the whiteness of my wrist. At the end of an hour the elder lady rose, and wishing me affectionately good morning, took her leave, the rest following.

We then had a pleasant day of peace and a sound night's rest, hardly disturbed by the ferocious shouting and singing of our guard, which, under other circumstances, might have been frightening. Anything more wild and barbarous than their chaunting I never listened to, but to us it was sweet as music, for we knew that it was raised to scare our jackals, the Beni Laam.

April 2.—Next day we crossed the Kerkha. When we saw the size of the river, swollen with melted snow and running eight miles an hour, and as wide as the Thames at Greenwich, we felt thankful indeed for having met Sirdal Khan. Here there would have been no fording possible, and we, or at least our goods, would have been at the mercy of our robber escort. The Khan, however, agreed for a sum of money, 100 krans

(nothing in Persia is done for nothing, either by prince or peasant), to have us ferried over with our baggage to the Persian shore, and our camels and horses swum after us. Hospitality is not a virtue real or pretended with the Persians, and the Khan, prince as he was and a really charming man, explained to Hajji Mohammed without affectation, that sixty of the one hundred krans he would count as "tea money," or as the Spaniards would say, "ruido de casa," payment for board and lodging. To this, however, we were indifferent, and appreciate none the less his kindness and good manners. He rode with us himself to the river on a well-bred Arabian mare he told us was "asil," as it well might be, and saw that all things in the matter of the rafts were done as they should be. At first we rode through the mounds of Eywan, which are disposed in a quadrangle fronting the river, and where we found plentiful remains of pottery; then past the kubbr of I forget what Mohammedan saint, facing a similar kubbr on the eastern bank; then across some fordable branches of the river and islands clothed with guttub and canora trees, to the main body of the Kerkha, where we found a raft preparing. The canora bushes had fruit on them, which the Khan politely picked, and gave me to eat, little yellow fruits, pleasantly acid, like medlars, and with stones inside.

The passage of the river was a tedious, not to say difficult, process, the single raft being composed of

twenty skins only, and very crank. We found besides, to our disgust, and also waiting to take advantage of our passage, our late disagreeable companions, Ghafil, the one-eyed Kurd, and all the rest, who presently began a loud argument with the Lurs as to who should pilot our camels through the water, a ticklish duty, which required both knowledge of the animals and skill in swimming, to perform successfully. At first we were naturally in favour of the Lurs, and unwilling to trust any part of our property with the mongrel Arabs; but when it came to the point of testing their capabilities, the Lurs broke lamentably down, being hardly able to manage the camels even on dry land, so by the Khan's advice we let the Bedouins manage the business, which I must say they performed with no little courage and skill. It takes two men to swim a camel safely. First of all the beast must be unloaded to the skin. Then a cord is tied to the tail for one man to hold by, and another mounts on his back. Thus he is driven into the water, and pushed on gradually till he loses his legs. The man on his back then floats off down stream of him, and holding with one hand by the hump, splashes water in the camel's face to keep his head straight, while the other urges him from behind. The camel seems heavier than most animals in the water, showing nothing but the tip of his nose above the surface, and he is a slow swimmer. It was an anxious quarter of an hour

for us while they were crossing, and great was the speculation among the bystanders as to the result. "Yetla," "ma yetla," "he does it," "he doesn't," were the cries as they were carried down the river. The strongest pushed fairly straight across, but those in the worst condition seemed borne helplessly along till camel and men and all disappeared out of our sight,—and we had already given them up as lost, when we saw them emerging quite a mile down upon the bank. Then we ourselves and the luggage were put across, the mares swimming with us, though they got across much quicker than we did. The raft was hardly eight feet square, a rough framework of tamarisk poles lashed together on twenty goat skins. Our luggage went first, with Hajji Mohammed perched on the top of it, booted and cloaked, and loaded with gun and cartridge bag, sublimely indifferent, though an accident would have sent him like lead to the bottom. We ourselves were more prudent, and divested ourselves of every superfluous garment before taking our seats, which we did in the company of our dogs and bird, and of Ghafil's wife, who nearly upset us at starting by jumping in from the shore upon us. Our feet were in the water all the way, and our hearts in our mouths, but by the mercy of Providence, we finally reached land amid a chorus of such "betting on the event" as had accompanied the camels. The last creature of our party was the little hamra mare, which Sirdal's servant had been

holding, and which, slipping her halter, came bravely across alone.

Just across the river lives Kerim Khan, Sirdal's enemy, a Kurdish chief in government pay. To him we had letters, and nothing more remained but to go to his camp, and ask his help to forward us to Dizful.

Our former enemies now came round us like a swarm of gnats, begging and praying us to let them be of some use. They wanted to tack themselves on to our party, and so go to Dizful in safety, under cover of our companionship; for it appears that they dare not go further than this without protection. The Persian authorities here are apt to imprison any of the Beni Laam who enter their district, and these people therefore seldom venture beyond the Kerkha, or just this side of it. Even so, they are sometimes caught: we saw a Beni Laam last night who had just arrived at the Seguand camp on his way home after three or four months' imprisonment at Dizful, besides having to pay a fine of one hundred and fifty krans. He was accused, no doubt justly, of sheep stealing, and he told us that several others of Mizban's people are at this moment in jail at Dizful.

The elder Ghafil finding that nothing could be got from us by persuasion, tried a little of his old blustering and threats, but several of Kerim Khan's people were standing by, and he was powerless here, so we had the pleasure of giving him a piece of our mind before he retired. His younger name-

sake, the man in green, could not contain his rage at our escape, and openly expressed his regret that we had not been killed in the wilderness as had been intended. After this little scene we saw no more of either of them, for though we afterwards heard of them in Kerim Khan's camp, they never dared come back into our presence.

There now came forward to welcome us a funny little boy with half-shut eyes, riding a good-looking chestnut mare. He dismounted, introduced himself as the Khan's son, and invited us to his father's tents. These he said lay close by, but we were not yet at the end of this day's difficulties. A network of irrigation, and a deep muddy canal had to be passed, and the camels which had so successfully escaped the dangers of the river, were again nearly perishing, and more ignobly, in the mud. The Kurds on this side the river were useless to assist us, as in their ignorance of camels they only made matters worse, and but for the sudden reappearance of the one-eyed giant, who had been once our greatest enemy, I think we should have all stuck fast. But now he made amends for part of his misdeeds and ill-designs by lending a powerful hand. He and Wilfrid between them unloaded the camels, and carried the luggage over on their heads up to their waists in holding mud, and then dragged through the camels. The boy, meanwhile, had gone to fetch help from his father; and we were hardly across, when he reappeared, still on his

chestnut mare, a Kehîleh Harkan, he told us, from the Beni Laam, for all the tribes here get their horses from the Arabs. And then we saw a cavalcade approaching, and in the midst a portly figure on an old grey mare, whom the boy introduced to us as the Khan.

Kerim Khan is, after Husseyn Koli Khan of the Bactiari, the most powerful chief of Luristan. His tribe occupies most of the district formerly known as Susiana, and from his camp on the Kerkha the ruins of Susa, now merely mounds, were visible. The land east of the river is very fertile, and being moreover well irrigated, is mostly under cultivation. Though living in tents, these Lurs can hardly be called nomadic, for their camps are permanent ones, at least for many months together. The one where we now found ourselves was in appearance quite as much a village as it was a camp, the tents being pitched close together in rows, and from their pent house shape looking exceedingly like houses. In the centre of the camp is a large open space, within which the sheep and cattle of this section of the tribe are driven at night. These, however, are not numerous, for Kerim Khan's people are cultivators of the soil, rather than shepherds. We noticed many good-looking horses about, procured, they told us, mostly from the Beni Laam.

The tent in which we were lodged was a most elaborate construction. Its roof was of the same material as that used by the Arabs, goat's hair

cloth, but the side walls were of carpet stuff, with intervals of open grass matting, through which the air circulated pleasantly. It had, besides, a regular door, while inside were some handsome Persian carpets spread near a lighted fire, which we soon made use of to dry our clothes, for we were wet through, with the rivers and canals we had crossed. The Lurs themselves differ even more from the Arabs, than their habitations from Bedouin tents. They have none of the Bedouin dignity of manner, and their dress is a mean one, a square coat of felt, and a little felt skull-cap, from under which their black hair curls up in a single greasy wave. Their voices, too, to one coming from among the Arabs, sounded exceedingly absurd, as they have a sort of sing-song intonation, and are pitched so high as to be almost in falsetto. This with the drawl, which we had noticed before in Ali Koli Khan, made us at first inclined to laugh. Kerim Khan keeps his people in excellent order, and no crowding round us or importunate questioning was permitted. The great man himself, though far from dignified in appearance, was well-mannered, and when he came, after having first sent us breakfast, to see us in our new tent, conversed politely, first a few words of Arabic, and afterwards in Kurdish, which Hajji Mohammed interpreted. We told him of our adventures, and of our intended visit to the Bactiari chieftain, with whom he was well acquainted, and of our journey from Haïl with Ali

Koli Khan, his son. I am not sure that he altogether believed us, when Hajji Mohammed added, that we were persons of distinction travelling for amusement. In Persia, it is the custom to judge strangers entirely by the appearance they make, and we, travelling in our poor Arab clothes, and accompanied by a single servant, gained less credit in his eyes than we should have found with Arabs, who care nothing for externals. He promised, however, to send us on with two horsemen on the following day to Dizful, and thence, if we would, to the Bactiari. In a private conference, however, later with the cavass, he imposed his conditions. We were to pay him ten tomams (four pounds sterling), as "tea-money," an exorbitant demand, which we were nevertheless obliged to accede to. Hospitality here is never given gratis, nor has anyone much shame of begging, for even our little friend and first acquaintance here, the boy on the chestnut mare, though his father is evidently a very rich man, spares no occasion of asking money, "for his bride," he says. Gold is what he likes best.

April 3.—The Khan and his son rode with us for half a mile this morning, to see us started on our way to Dizful. He has given us two horsemen as he promised, so at least we have something for our money, and they seem respectable people. We had hardly ten miles to go, and the road, for there was a road, was in tolerable order, and the men helped us drive our camels according to such lights in

camel driving as they possessed. At first, we made a circuit, so as to cross the canal at a place where there was an old stone bridge, and in so doing we passed not two miles from Shush, the ancient Susa. Wilfrid would have liked to visit the mound, but I was impatient to get on, and in fact there is nothing above-ground by all accounts to see. Then we travelled through a beautiful plain, bounded by the splendid line of the Bactiari mountains, still covered almost to their base with snow, a refreshing sight, for the sun was now very hot. At their foot, we could make out the town of Dizful, indistinctly at first, and then clearly, while all around us lay well-cultivated fields of waving corn just turning yellow. Here and there grew shady canora trees, and there were many rills of water. Now and then, too, a village shaped like a fortress, with a surrounding wall of sun-dried bricks, on the roofs of which storks had built their nests, and were clattering with their bills. In the fields, we heard francolins calling and quails; and the roadside was gay with flowers, red, blue, and yellow. Several times we stopped in the shade of a tree, and let the horses and camels graze on the crops, for so our horsemen insisted we should do, and there was no hurry. Travellers here are probably too scarce for grazing rules to be enforced against them. Nor did the peasants we met seem to mind. We were in Persia at last, and the country seemed very delightful.

At eleven o'clock, we came to a large village by

the side of a broad shallow stream of transparent water, flowing over a bed of pebbles, and overhung by shady trees. A group of women were washing their clothes, and the road was full of country people on foot and donkey-back, crossing the ford. A pretty picture, such as we had hardly seen since we left Syria. This, and a second river which we passed presently, are called the Bellarú, and cover with their various branches nearly a mile of country. The water in them was cold enough to make a pleasant coolness in the air, coming like the Kerkha water from the snows. Then at two o'clock, we found ourselves close to Dizful, set picturesquely on the great river Diz, which is spanned by a fine old bridge of squared masonry, the work of ancient times. The town itself occupies some high ground beyond the river, that is to say on its left bank, but on this side, there is not a single house. The bridge is the main feature. It has twenty-one arches, some pointed, some round, with buttresses to break the stream. It is very much out of repair, there being one hole in it big enough for a camel to fall through. It would seem to belong in part to the age of the Persian monarchy, in part to that of the Caliphs, but I have not sufficient knowledge of architecture to feel sure about this.

In any case, here we are at Dizful, and once more under a settled government, with police and soldiers, and all the other blessings of civilisation at our call. We may be thankful that it is so.

CHAPTER IV.

"In Kanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-house decree,
Where Alph the sacred river ran,
Through caverns measureless by man,
Down to a sunless sea."

COLERIDGE.

Pleasures of town life—The Khani's court—Bactiari shepherds—Shustar—Its palace, its river, and its garden—A telegraph clerk.

April 4.—Dizful, though still alive with a population of 30,000 persons, and a certain amount of traffic, for it is the corn market of the tribes westwards on the Ottoman frontier, and eastwards on the Bactiari, now possesses but the shadow of its past prosperity, if we may judge from the neglected condition of its magnificent bridge and the ruined walls which remain to mark its former circumference. Between these and the limit within which the present inhabited town has shrunk, lies a widish strip of unoccupied land. Here we have our camp in a hollow out of sight from the road, and here we had hoped to remain unnoticed and undisturbed. But alas, it was Friday, and the whole population turned out at daybreak, and there was no chance of escaping discovery. All the inhabitants of Dizful, men, women, and children, have been idling about, holiday-making in their best

clothes all day long, with apparently nothing to do but stare at us. I am sure they consider the arrival of a party of strangers as a God-send, for from early dawn until an hour ago, at the *asr* when the governor sent three soldiers to disperse them, they have literally swarmed round our tent like their own flies. Not content, as Arabs are, with looking on from a reasonable distance, these Persians persist in trying to thrust their way inside the tent, and not succeeding, they sit down in rows so close to it that we cannot stir without pushing somebody away. Besides, they cannot look with their eyes; they must touch everything with their fingers, and they must laugh and talk, and have answers to all their foolish questions. They mean no harm, but it is very tiresome, and has hindered us not a little in our repairs and preparations. The camel saddles and bags wanted mending, the camels had to be doctored for mange, with an ointment which had first to be mixed, the horses to be shod, the stores looked through, purchases to be made of rope and provisions, and all this with several hundred persons at one's elbow; each ready with advice and interference.

Our appearance, I have no doubt, is a great temptation to them, for there can be few things more unutterably dull than one of their festivities. Pigeon-flying is here as much the fashion as it is at Aleppo, and there is the same element of gambling in the performance. The birds are let

loose from their separate dovecots, and allure each other home; such at least is the explanation given us of the excitement shown in watching them. Whoever gets most birds from his neighbour wins. Then there are dervishes and seyyids in green clothes who go about selling sugar-plums and collecting alms; and a few of the richest have horses on which they gallop about. We, however, in our Arab dresses, are a perplexity and an endless source of inquiry to all; and our dogs, and our falcon, and our camels, excite almost as much interest as they might in Hyde Park or the Champs Elysées. We should have done far better to stay the other side of the river, where there is an honest bit of desert much more in keeping with our establishment, and where nobody comes. Rasham, too, to add to our troubles, got loose and flew wildly about over the crowd, and could not be caught till Wilfrid climbed to the top of a tower there was in the city wall, and lured him down. We were almost at our wits' end with the mob when the governor's guard arrived, and restored order. I profit by the quiet thus secured, and by the last hour of daylight, to write my journal.

Besides the vulgar populace, several polite and well-to-do inhabitants have called on us; the most agreeable of them, a party of four, came in the morning, and afterwards spent the day sitting under the shade of the ruined wall close by, where

Wilfrid returned their visit. In the afternoon they came again. They were Ardeshir Khan, a very dignified and very fat man; Pasha Khan, next in dignity and fat; Yusef Khan, thin and very dark; and lastly, Aga Shukr Allah, red-haired and speaking a little Arabic, and thus able to converse with us and interpret for his friends.

The wife of one of these gentlemen sent to propose to come and see me, and on my accepting, arrived immediately with a score of attendants. We sat together on my carpet, which I ordered to be spread near the tent; but with the best will in the world, our conversation was but halting; Hadji Mohammed is not a fluent dragoman, and he grows deafer every day. A seyyid also called on us and brought his little girl, named Khatún, a funny little thing of five, to whom I gave a silver kran; then some rather ill-mannered persons calling themselves Sabæans.*

Two or three people have been riding about on horseback; one on a very handsome little bay horse, said to be of Nejd origin, brought back by a pilgrim, as it is the fashion for pilgrims who can afford to do so, to bring back a colt from Nejd.

This year's pilgrims they tell us have not yet returned, and we are the first to announce their arrival at Meshhed Ali. We hoped to have heard something here of our friend Ali Koli Khan, but are disappointed. He intended to go by water

* Christians of St. John, see "Bedouin Tribes."

from Bagdad to Mohammra or Ahwas, and so to Shustar and home—the usual route, in fact—for ours is not a road travelled by respectable people. Dizful communicates with the outer world only by Shustar. It is of no use, however, waiting for Ali Koli. We cannot spare the time, and must pay our visit to Huseyn Koli Khan now or not at all. No one can tell us exactly where to find the Bactiari chief, some saying he is at Shustar, some at Teheran, while all agree that some of his people are encamped between this and Shustar, and to Shustar we consequently mean to go.

Our last visit was from the governor or deputy-governor, who being, we suspect, not quite sober, (for the Persians drink wine) behaved so oddly that Wilfrid had to beg him to take himself off there and then. On the whole, our day's rest at Dizful has been hardly a pleasant one.

April 5.—Shaking the dust of this very tiresome city from our feet, we resumed our march to-day. We are depressed at the poor reception we have received after all in Persia, the country we have heard of so long as famed for its politeness, but perhaps we ourselves are to blame. Hajji Mohammed tells us we should have travelled in a different way, and he is probably right. The Persians, he says, judge only from what they see, and have no idea that people travelling without servants can be respectable. We should have come with a retinue, an escort of fifty men and half as

many servants. Then we should have been *fêted* everywhere. But it is too late now, and we must travel on as we can.

We took the Shustar road this morning, a well-travelled track, passing at first through corn-fields and villages, and then across a fine plain of grass. The soil here looks richer than any I have ever seen in any part of the world, and it is well-watered and wooded with canora trees. We are marching parallel with the mountains, a lovely range crowned with snow, and quite 8000 to 10,000 feet above the sea. Immediately to our right, a wonderful square-topped hill stands out in front of the main range; a *diz*, or fortress, the people call it. We have passed several encampments of Bactiari; wild-looking people, who when you ride up to their tents, run at once to their guns as though they expected constantly to be attacked. They are guarded by some of the most ferocious dogs I ever saw, which were with difficulty prevented from attacking Shiekha and Sayad. Their masters, however, are not inhospitable when things are explained, and we had several basins of milk offered us on the way. From them we have learned that the Khani, as they call their chief, is somewhere on the road, and the prospect has cheered us not a little. To-night we are encamped all alone, except for the company of an old Arab and his wife, who joined us on the road—Chaab Arabs they call themselves—who have been useful, help-

ing us with the camels. There are many Bedouin Arabs, it appears, in this part of Persia. We have got a sheep to-night, and are to have a feast.

April 6.—The Bactiari tents are like those of the Arabs, but the men are dressed as I have described the Seguand, and Kerim Khan's people. They keep horses, and carry lances or guns, but I saw no horses which seemed well-bred. Early in the morning a man came from one of their tents, and told us that the Khani had passed the night not ten miles from where we were, at a place called Obeyd, which our two guides from Kerim Khan knew well. It lay off the high-road to the left, just under the square-topped hill we noticed yesterday. Though anxious now to get on to Shustar, where alone we can procure servants (and they are a necessity we feel more and more every day), we could not of course forego our visit to Ali Koli's father, and taking a line in the direction pointed out, struck out to the north somewhat back from our yesterday's line of march. It was a rough bit of travelling over broken rocky ground, cut up here and there with streams. Very beautiful, however, for in every hollow there grew real turf brilliantly green, and sprinkled over with borage flowers and anemones; and wherever there was a pool of water, frogs were croaking among the weeds. Our progress was slow, for Assad, one of our men, had bought a donkey at the camp, with a new born foal, and as the foal could not walk, he carried it before him on his horse. He was

continually letting it slip off, and stopping to hoist it up again. Towards nine o'clock, we came to a ridge of limestone, overlooking a wide valley out of which the square crag we had been following rose like a wall of masonry, five hundred feet or more; beyond which again, lay the snow range of the Bactiari. While we were looking and admiring, we heard shots fired, and knew that there must be a camp in the valley, the Khani's, we hoped, and so it proved. But before descending, the two Persians insisted upon going through an elaborate furbishing of themselves and their clothes. There was a little pool close by, and there they washed and combed themselves, and then washed their clothes, spreading them afterwards on the rocks to dry. We in the meanwhile found a bit of shade under a rock and slept. It was about noon when we woke and went down to the valley, where we presently saw a large building, the fort of Obeyd, with half-a-dozen white canvas tents grouped round it. This was Huseyn Koli Khan's travelling camp, and the fort was also his. It is modern and in good repair, a square building flanked with towers, surrounding a courtyard.

In the middle of the camp stood the Khani's reception tent like a great umbrella, for the side walls were taken down for the heat. There Huseyn Koli sat in state surrounded by a kind of court.

Huseyn Koli Khan is the greatest chieftain of all Western Persia. He is said to be able to put

20,000 horsemen into the field, and this may very well be true, as the whole of the south-western slopes of the mountains are occupied by his tribe. In person he is imposing without being particularly good-looking; he is a thick-set rather heavy man, with a broad face, brown beard and hair, and I think grey eyes. He reminds me of a picture I have seen somewhere of Ghenghis Khan, or another Mongul prince, from whom it is not altogether impossible he may be descended. His manner is very straightforward and plain, and he gives one the impression of being altogether an honest man. He received us very cordially, made us sit down by him in the middle of his courtiers who were standing obsequiously round him, and gave us some cups of excellent tea.

The manner of tea-making in Persia deserves notice, inasmuch as the tea is there put into the boiling water, while with us the boiling water is poured on the tea; and tea made in the Persian fashion is without the bitter taste too often the result of our method.

We spent an hour or two thus with the Khan, giving him the latest news of his son, who it appears is expected daily now from Ahwas, and learning much about the road which still lies between us and Bushire. The Khan is on his way to Teheran, where he has rank under the Shah as a general in the army, so is unable to invite us to visit him in the mountains where his home is,

and where he keeps the stud of Arab mares for which his name is famous. This would be more unfortunate if we did not now recognise the necessity of getting without further delay to the coast. The weather in the last two days has become suddenly hot, and it would be folly to allow ourselves to be caught by the summer with so long a march before us. Besides, we are hardly in such travelling order as to allow of great experiments. In spite of all our exertions, and all our offers of high wages, we cannot get any one to drive our camels. The fact is, the camel is almost as strange a beast here as he would be in England, and camel-drivers about as scarce. So we are to go to Shustar to-morrow accompanied by a confidential man of the Khani's, who will put us into good hands.

We had a grand debate on returning to our tent whether or not to send presents to our host; but on Hajji Mohammed's advice, and rather against our own judgment, at last did so. But our host would receive nothing, saying that it was for him to do honour to his guests, and that he wanted nothing. He has sent us a most excellent dinner now, consisting of half-a-dozen really well-cooked dishes, things we had not tasted since we left Bagdad. There is also a live lamb to take with us to-morrow, and two large boxes of sweetmeats made of fruits and flowers.

April 7.—Our visit to Huseyn Koli Khan, though a disappointment in some ways, for it was

but a morning call, has been none the less a good fortune to us. The confidential man whom the Khan sent with us brought us early into Shustar, and through his intervention we are now comfortably established in a really delightful place, the deserted palace of the Shahzade, or Prince Governor of the province, which is to us as a haven of repose, fortress and palace and garden in one. But all this requires description.

Shustar from the river is extraordinarily like Dizful. The Karkería, on which it stands, is the Diz over again, but I think a larger river; and there is a stone bridge apparently of the same date. The bridge of Shustar is a fine work. It is the broadest I have ever seen out of Europe, for one might drive a coach across it but for the holes; and it is quite fifty feet high above the water. The most singular feature of it is that it is built in a zigzag, and that it has immense piers to the buttresses, some of which seem to have held water-wheels. The parapet is very low, and the whole thing so much out of repair, that crossing it as we did, in a hurricane of wind, we were rather nervous about the camels. Below it is an immense weir, over which the river falls with a deafening roar. A fine arched gateway shuts it off from the city, and just above stands the castle, where we are.

Shustar seems a larger town than Dizful, but it is said to be less flourishing. They both have great empty spaces within the walls, and plenty of ruins.

The kalat is an immense rambling place, enclosing a number of different buildings. First, there are rows of vaulted buildings, intended probably for barracks, with a large outer court, full just now of green pasture, a sort of mallow, on which we have turned our camels out to graze. These outbuildings are two storeys high, with loop-holes to shoot out of. From the outer court a paved causeway leads up to a narrow gate, the entrance of an inner castle, built round a large square court, with trees and flower-beds in the middle. From this again a flight of fifteen steps leads up to a terrace, garden, and pavilion three storeys high. This last is the hammam, and is the building specially placed at our disposal. The Shahzade is absent, and the only inhabitants of his kalat are a garrison of about a dozen soldiers, but they live in the outer circle of buildings, and will not disturb us. The prince-governor's absence is a disadvantage to us, although we profit by it to inhabit his house, for our letters are to him, and we do not know what sort of wakil he has left here. To-day, however, we have seen nobody, and have been very happy and content in the coolness and peace of all around. Only the river makes a distant roar, far below, for from the terrace one looks sheer down at least eighty feet to the water.

April 8.—This spot is like a thing in a fairy tale. Our pavilion contains several rooms on the ground-floor, grouped round a central piece where

there is a fountain; and above this is a gallery with more empty rooms round it. We live on the ground-floor, and our windows open on to a narrow terrace with a low stone parapet, from which one can throw a stone down into the river. The Karkaría makes a sharp bend just above Shustar, round what looks like the most beautiful park, a level greensward with immense dark green shady trees, standing as if planted for ornament. Here we sit, and late in the evening and early in the morning I see a pair of pelicans swimming or flying below. The terrace communicates with the garden, which is gay with poppies, pink and lilac and white, in full bloom. There is a little tank, and a row of stunted palm-trees, where rollers, green and blue birds, like jays, sit, while swifts dart about catching musquitoes and flies, only a few hundred, alas, out of the millions that torment us. For there is no rose without a thorn, nor is this lovely kiosk and garden full of blooming poppies without its plague. The flies and musquitoes are maddening, and to-day the heat of summer has burst upon us. After a hot night, the day dawned hotter still, and a sultry wind blew up dark clouds, till now the sky is black all round.

Towards evening we had thunder and lightning, but hardly a drop of rain; and to-night the air is heavy as lead. I am getting anxious now about the heat. I wish we could get away, either to the hills or the sea; but I fear we shall be detained

some days. The storm has prevented the Shahzade's wakil from paying us the visit he announced this morning, and we cannot even prepare to go on without seeing him; we are, in fact, dependent on his assistance. We sent him our letter for the Shahzade early this morning, and Hajji Mohammed brought back word that he was coming immediately; but we have been waiting all day, and he has not come. What is still more tiresome is the unfortunate circumstance that no letter has come for us from the British Consul at Bussora. This puts us into an awkward position; we had given out that we expected the letter, and it is worse to say that one expects such a letter and not to get it, than never to have mentioned it.

Several visitors have been to see us, two or three merchants, a doctor, and others; they all, on hearing we had not received the countenance we had expected, looked on us somewhat doubtfully, in spite of our talking about our letter of recommendation to the Shahzade. However, we shall see what the wakil says to-morrow.

April 10.—This is the evening of our fourth day at Shustar, and we are not absolutely sure of starting, though we hope to get away to-morrow morning. . . . Yesterday was a wretched day. The night before last Wilfrid was suddenly taken ill, and though the attack has now passed off, it has left him weak. A serious indisposition makes all minor difficulties seem trifles; but these become impor-

tant when they cause delay, and we have been in much trouble about getting servants.

This town life is certainly not healthy in the great heat (and summer has come upon us in earnest); and every day wasted will make travelling more difficult, and the heat greater. We hope, however, that we have settled all with the governor, but until we are actually off I shall not be at ease.

The wakil has reluctantly promised us an escort for Bebahan, protesting that the country between it and Shustar is so unsafe, that he cannot guarantee our safety, but he may at the last moment recall his promise. And we are still without a servant, except a little man who takes the camels out to graze in the morning, and brings them home at night. This little man says he will go with us, but I doubt his doing so when the moment comes; so many people have offered their services and then backed out, amongst them the so-called "Sheykh" Mohammed, our acquaintance of the mill and not a sheykh at all, only a zellem of Chaab extraction, and a householder of Shustar. But we do not like him, nor any of the candidates, except two soldiers, and these we cannot have, as they belong to the small garrison of the kalat, and the governor refuses to give them leave.

The governor has been very suspicious of us, and thrown all the obstacles he could in our way. He came yesterday, fortunately not till Wilfrid was better and able to receive him, and was evidently

indisposed to further our wishes. His manner, though extremely polite, showed that he was determined we should go to Ahwas, not Bebahan. He strongly urged us to give up all notion of taking the Bebahan road; the country was unsafe; no escort short of a thousand men would suffice to get us through, and that number he had not at his disposal; and besides, we should be wanting in respect to the Shahzade if we did not go aud present our letter to him; we were really bound to go to Ahwas, where we should find him. As to a letter from the English balioz (consul) at Bussora, no such communication had been received; and he the wakil, knew nothing about us. He could only repeat that he would do nothing for us except forward us to Ahwas. He positively refused an escort for any other object.

Things were in this position when the wakil left, and we were at our wits' end, when fortunately, a young gentleman called who belongs to the telegraph office, Mirza Ali Mohammed, of Shiraz, "captain of telegraphs," who talks a little Arabic, and a little French. It then occurred to Wilfrid to telegraph to the Legation at Teheran, requesting that the government there should be asked to order the wakil of Shustar to give us an escort to Bebahan. The captain of telegraphs carried off this message, which he had written and translated into Persian for us, and the money for its transmission; but this morning he returned

the money, with news that the telegram could not be sent. The fact is he dared not send it without informing his superior, who declined to let it go. But it has had its effect. The governor has no pretext now for doubting our respectability, for suspicious characters would not want to communicate with the central government at Teheran. So instead of a thousand, we are to have an escort of six men and a sergeant to accompany us to Bebahan. It has been unwillingly granted, and I shall not be surprised if it should even yet be withdrawn.

Later.—There seems to have been a storm somewhere; the air is clear, and we hope for less oppressive weather. But the foretaste of heat we have had, is a warning. We have talked over our plans, and agreed to give up all idea of pushing on to Bender Abbas, and to be satisfied with reaching Bushire. There can be no difficulty in finding Captain Cameron, for he will be obliged to pass between Bebahan and the sea, but we must make haste or he will have crossed our line before we can get to the coast. His intention was to keep as near to the coast as possible, so that we ought to meet him near or at Bender Dilam.

Three or four respectable merchants of Shustar have waited upon us this evening, and given us much friendly advice about the dangers of travel in which we do not much believe. They shook their heads when Wilfrid remarked, that surely under the administration of the Shahzade and his excellent

wakil, the country must be safe, and assured us that the wakil was perfectly justified in dissuading us from our undertaking. It would be much safer to go to Ahwas. Another, Hajji Abdallah, had with him a letter in English from an English firm at Bushire, which he begged us to translate. It was far from complimentary, and we had some difficulty in disguising it under a form of Arabic politeness. He, too, was loud in his dissuasion of our journey.

Our visitors shewed no sign of going away, and I believe they would have sat on all through the night talking, had we not dismissed them. Hajji Abdallah's last words were an entreaty to reconsider our decision, and abandon the foolish plan of going to Bebahan. He has once been that way he says, and would not for the world go again; there are not only dangerous wild tribes, but mountain passes and impassable rocks. We listened unmoved, and in fact we had no choice.



SHAGRAN.

CHAPTER V.

"Solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant."
TACITUS.

Illness and misery—A Persian escort—The Shah's Arab subjects—Ram Hormuz and its nightingales—Night marching—Deserted villages—How they collect taxes in Persia—Bebahan.

Friday, April 11.—It would be easy to quote unlucky starts on Fridays, and I am afraid this is one. Wilfrid is ill again, a passing fatigue we hope, from loading the camels this morning in the hot sun, and riding all day long in it. He is lying down now in the tent and trying to rest, but the flies are intolerable.

Our plan in leaving Shustar was to go with our escort, seven soldiers on foot, armed six with matchlocks and one with a narghileh, to Ram Hormuz, a small town eighty miles on the road to Bebahan, and there get a reinforcement from the Ferraz-bashi or deputy governor of the place for the other eighty miles. This sounded well enough, but already our escort has deserted us, and we are alone.

After delays of all sorts, for till the moment of starting we were still without servants, we got our camels loaded, and about ten o'clock rode out of the

palace gate and through the streets of Shustar, and over a stone bridge, which spans the second of the two branches of the river on which the town stands, and into the open country beyond. It was terribly hot, and the whole country is a plague of flies, which buzz about one all day long, and settle on one's head at night.

Our camels have profited by the mallows in the court of the palace to such an extent that they are all fat and frisky, and we had some trouble in loading them. But, at the last moment, we had an unexpected offer of assistance. A young Arab, dressed in a green calico jíbbeh, suddenly appeared upon the scene, and volunteered his services. He had a pleasant face, so that we were taken with him at once. He told us that he was a native of some village on the Tigris near Bagdad, and that he had been impressed by the Turks for their navy, in which he had served three years, that he had then managed to desert while in port at Bussorah, and had fled across the border to Mohamrah. He had since earned his bread by working as horse-keeper for one of the Bawiyeh sheykhs, and later, tiring of that, in service with different Persians at Shustar. His idea now, was to get down to the sea once more, and he begged us to take him with us to Bushire. By accident Hajji Mohammed knew something of some of his relations at Bagdad, and as such a person was exactly what we most wanted, we accepted him at once, on his own terms. This young

fellow's coming has been an advantage to us in more ways than one, for it had the immediate effect of inducing another of the crowd who were witnessing our departure to volunteer, and a little red-haired Persian in blue frock and trowsers, came forward to enlist in our service. Thus we are no longer wholly dependent on our old cavass and on ourselves.

As soon as we were outside the town, our sergeant and the six soldiers began to give themselves airs of military importance, advancing in front of us in skirmishing order, and enjoining us to keep close together, although the country had a quite peaceable appearance, the road much frequented by country people on donkeys, unarmed and peaceable folks. The track led through undulating ground chiefly barren, here and there a patch of cultivation, often between high banks. Our brave defenders here shewed their zeal by running up to the tops of the steepest and highest of these banks, firing off their guns at random, generally in the air, but one of the shots hit a lizard sitting in its hole. Their energy, however, cooled as the heat increased; and towards noon, they were satisfied to trudge along with only an occasional diversion to look out for enemies. By a quarter to one o'clock, they all seemed tired, and we too were glad to halt for three quarters of an hour, under a large shady canora tree, in the midst of a field of oats. Here we ate our luncheon, while the animals fed on the oats. Wil-

frid complained a little of the sun, but it was not till we had gone on again for a couple of hours that he acknowledged he felt really ill. We were just turning off the track to the north, to go to the tents of a certain Hassan Khan, known to the soldiers, when he said he could have gone no further. The tents were not a mile from the road, but getting there was almost too much for him. We found them set in a circular enclosure, fenced in by a hedge of branches, like a new made Sussex fence, and evidently intended to last longer than a true Bedouin camp ever does. Here there are about a dozen small tents, half hair, half matting. Outside the enclosure, a few mares and foals grazing, among them one rather nice filly, Wadneh Hursan they say, and animals of all sorts, cows, sheep, and goats have been brought inside the hedge for the night.

Wilfrid is extremely tired. The rest seems to have done him no good. He complains of his head and of pains all over. I hope fatigue and the heat are sufficient to account for his feeling ill. I dread a return of the attack he had at Shustar. I wish we had not left the town. This is a forlorn spot to be ill in, and though at Shustar we should be no better off, as far as concerns getting out of the country, there would be a few more comforts, and a chance of sending for help to Bussora. If he gets worse we shall be in an almost hopeless position. Every place seems frightfully far off the moment there is a difficulty about moving; to get back to

Shustar would be almost as impracticable as to go on to Ram Hormuz. Seven hours' travelling seems now an impassable gulf. I have arranged a sort of mosquito net for Wilfrid against the flies, but it only keeps them out for a time, and then a few manage to get inside it, and it has all to be re-arranged. But now it is nearly sundown, and the flies will go to sleep at dark; and if the night is cool he may get some sleep.

Everybody here is fortunately kind. Hassan Khan, the chief, is away at Shustar, but his brother Kambar Aga received us well. He has good manners, speaks Arabic pretty fairly, and has been telling me about his tribe, a section of the Bawiyeh of Ajjem, as distinguished from the Bawiyeh of the Ottoman dominions. The people and their chief seem to be very poor. Kambar professes himself ready to accompany us to-morrow to another camp not far off, and on our line of march, that of Hajji Salman, an Arabic-speaking tribe; this is fortunate, as our escort has deserted. They probably never meant to come further than this, but however that may be, they have in fact abandoned us and gone home to Shustar. In the middle of the day, while we were sitting under the canora tree, they demanded money, and Hajji Mohammed foolishly, without asking us, gave them as much as they ought to have had for the whole journey to Ram Hormuz, and as a consequence, having secured their pay, and with no further motive for taking trouble they departed. Their

company is no loss, they were disagreeable and tiresome, but they were of value as a mark of government protection, and in that respect it is unfortunate that they have left us.

Escort or no escort I care not, if only Wilfrid would get better, and he seems no better.

Saturday evening, April 12.—Wilfrid alarmingly ill all night. He got rapidly worse, and then seemed unconscious of all around; it seemed hopeless, but now he has rallied, and I think the worst is over. Still I have made up my mind not to look beyond the necessity of the moment, and indeed these twenty-four hours blot out past and future. I don't know why I write a journal. He cannot sit up yet, though he says he shall be able to travel to-night. I don't know what to think, but the wish to move is something gained; a short time ago he could hardly speak, and if he really has turned the corner, a few hours may make a great difference. He now says that by travelling at night only, he shall be able to go on.

Ghada, our new Arab, has behaved very well. I hardly know what I should have done without him to keep the fire up all night, and help to make medicines and beef-tea. In the evening and night I tried everything I could think of out of our small stock of medicines, and in vain. The sun rose and blazed fiercely, and the flies swarmed as before. But in the afternoon the illness took another turn, and now, at any rate, the danger seems to be past

To please Wilfrid, though I doubt his being able to travel, I have packed up everything and got the tents down, and each separate load put ready; for to carry out the plan of night-travelling, we must load after dark, that is, by the light of a very small moon, when it rises about one o'clock. We are then to be off, Wilfrid to ride his delúl, and we are to get as far as we can; I have got cold tea and beef-tea in bottles, to be accessible at any moment. He has remained lying down on his rugs and pillow, the only things not yet packed, which, when the time comes, will be put on his delúl.

Kambar Aga and his tribe are good people. Nothing could be kinder than they have been. Hassan Khan has sent a third brother from Shustar, Aga Ibrahim, who is to accompany us with six of his men to Hajji Salman's camp.

April 13.—Wilfrid was able to travel for four hours, and though much exhausted seems really none the worse. We reached the Salamat camp about six this morning. We hope to set out presently—about sunset.

The moon rose last night towards one o'clock, but owing to the slowness of everybody the loading took more than an hour. They all wanted to wait till the moon should be high in the sky before starting. We first struck across the plain of pasture and scrub to get back to the track, and then pursued our way along it eastwards. At half-past

five we saw some tents to the south, but these our guides said were the wrong ones. An hour later met two zellems, who told us the contrary, but too late for us to return; and they added that they came from a camp of Salamat Arabs an hour or so further east. It was already hot, but we pushed on, the road good and level, splendid pasture, hills to the left, an interminable plain in front and to the right, extending to the Karkaría and beyond it. Some tents were pointed out to us, said to be on the opposite bank of the river. We reached the Salamat camp, Sheykh Abeyeh, at eight o'clock.

A few fairly good-looking but very small mares are to be seen. The camp has been evidently on the spot for weeks, and is accordingly unsavoury, more like a village than a camp.

We have, or rather had, for I write while waiting to start, our tent on a small tell separated by a dip in the ground from the Salamat encampment. The ground here is covered with a horrid little spiked grass, like miniature barley to look at, which pricks through everything. Its barbed thorns are like fish-hooks, very difficult to extract, and all our clothes and bedding are full of them.

Wilfrid spent the day lying down in the tent, able to talk though tired. The people here are not ill-bred, and they have even been kind to us. Their Sheykh, Abeyeh, with several of his friends, and relations, came to see us soon after our arrival. Abeyeh told us that his tribe belongs to the Ahl es-

Shimal, and he knows all about the tribes of the Hamád and their horses. His brother Rashid showed us a very beautiful grey colt, which he offered to exchange for our hamra mare, who is suffering from a sore back. The colt is too young, or might have been worth taking; the owner says he would not part with it but that the Shahzade has intimated an intention of buying it. The Shahzade is, it seems, in the habit of purchasing all the good-looking horses he hears of, and does not pay for them, but he does not take mares; this, at least, is the tale told to us. Our mare, though thoroughbred, is in such wretched condition that the Shahzade would hardly care to seize her.

Abeyeh readily agreed to escort us to Ram Hormuz with six khayal, Rashid proposed to accompany us on foot as camel driver, and Aga Ibrahim (from Hassan Khan's), also offers to go on. It is five o'clock, time to pack. * * * Eight o'clock. Wilfrid felt so ill an hour ago that all these arrangements seemed to be vain. But he is better, and now we are off.

April 14.—Our new plan of travelling by night seems to answer well. Wilfrid was able to go on from nine till five o'clock. He is recovering, though reduced to the extreme of thinness. The heat during the day is insufferable, and even if there had been no cause of anxiety, we could hardly have continued marching by day. The flies are intolerable, they follow us, and are found every-

where; at night when we are riding they are sitting in swarms upon our heads, and if driven off, perch again in spite of darkness. However, in the dark they are quiet unless disturbed, which is some small relief. Last night our track went a good deal up and down, crossing small ravines and watercourses, and pools and ditches full of water. Sometimes we waded through tall grass, splendid stuff, growing quite wild and uncared for. The moon serves us hardly at all, but we could see dimly by starlight. The constellation of the Scorpion is now our guide, rising as it does in the south-east. I have slept little lately, and once last night I fell fast asleep on horseback, and woke with a start at a sound of munching. It was my mare grazing eagerly knee-deep in wild oats. Where the camels were I could not see, but heard them soon afterwards some way off ahead. Wilfrid bore up as long as he could, till at five o'clock he said he could not go a yard further, and we camped for the day, pitching the tent on a tell commanding all surrounding tells. Our escort objected to this halt. "The Shirazi will come down from those hills and rob us," said Abeyeh, "and the town of Ram Hormuz is only three or four hours further. Let us go on." His objection was natural; this is very exposed ground, and close to us on the north rises a range of crags, from which the Shirazi robbers may be watching us. But perched on the tell we get a little air, and this is worth some risk. Besides, they have not come

yet, and we shall be gone presently. Abeyeh argued in vain; if there had been legions of robbers in sight, I don't think Wilfrid would have moved. He was indeed unfit to stir, and has been lying on the ground under the shade of the tent ever since. A halt like this is not much of a rest; the heat is too overpowering, the flies too troublesome. Beyond the rocky range we see high snow peaks, very tantalising in this furnace, and looking the other way, there is just below us a fine piece of meadow land on the banks of a running stream. In all the hollows there is rich pasture. Abeyeh and his men have kept a good look-out, some posted about on heights, and the rest watching the mares hobbled, and turned loose to graze.

It is four o'clock; the heat lessening, and Wilfrid says he is ready to go on. We must pack. * *

April 15.—We have at last reached Ram Hormuz, or as it is pronounced "Ramuz." We left our bivouac on the tell at five o'clock yesterday afternoon. Wilfrid tried riding on horseback, but found the effort too great, and had to give it up and mount his delúl. Our way lay through more long grass, and ditches, and water. I, as sleepy as the night before, was constantly dozing off and waking suddenly in the middle of some long dream, unable to remember where I was. There is nothing so painful as this struggle with sleep, and it lasted all night long. At last we came suddenly in sight of some camp fires about half a mile away to our right,

and Abeyeh, fearing to advance further, ordered a halt. There was danger, he said, in coming on an encampment unawares, lest we should be taken for enemies. We did not stop to argue, but with delight obeyed, and in a few minutes were sound asleep upon the ground—nor did we wake till day was already breaking.

A discussion now arose what further was to be done. The tents, we were informed, belonged to the Khamîs, an Arab tribe, half Bedouin, half fellah, and Abeyeh was for spending the day with them. But the sound sleep had done Wilfrid good, and as it grew light we could see the palm groves of Ram Hormuz, apparently ten miles off, and we knew that there we should get refuge from the sun. So leaving the rest to follow or not as they would—we got on our horses and started at a gallop, Shiekha and Sayad bounding on in front of us delighted at this unexpected run. At first there was no road, and we got entangled in a series of watercourses, but scrambling through these we reached a footpath where the going was good, and presently overtook a party of Arabs, men and women, riding in on donkeys to market at the town. They all expressed themselves much pleased to see us, taking us to be Arabs like themselves, and here in Persia they always seem delighted to meet their countrymen. They pointed us out the town, for there was more than one grove of palms, and in the mirage which hid everything as the sun rose, we had lost

sight of it. At half-past six we stopped at the ferraz-bashi's door, and in another minute were sitting in a cool court-yard under the shade of a wall, waiting till the respectable functionary, our host, had finished his devotions.

On the sight of our letters from the governor of Shustar he made us very welcome—conversing through the medium of his secretary, who knows Arabic. Carpets were brought, and tea made—the most delicious draught we ever tasted in our lives—flavoured with orange and some acid fruit. The gallop has cured Wilfrid, and he says he shall not be ill again.

Our caravan having arrived, we have moved outside the town, for the ferraz-bashi's house is not big enough to hold us all, and are encamped on a little mound overlooking the gardens which skirt Ram Hormuz. I wish I could describe the beauty of this place. Round us lie a few acres of green wheat, in which quails and francolins are calling, and through which a little stream of running water winds. Close by, on another mound, stands a beautiful little kubbr, the tomb of some saint, and on either side gardens half run wild, a delicious tangle of pomegranate, fig, and vine, with here and there lemon and peach, and groups of palm. The pomegranates now are in full flower, and so are the roses, and every thicket is alive with nightingales. It is nearly sunset, and groups of blue-gowned Persians are coming across the fields from the town,

to wash and say their prayers at the stream and the kubbr. The town itself is half hidden in the gardens, but shows picturesquely through, backed by a range of crimson hills, scored and lined with blue shadows. We have been following the edge of these hills all the way from Shustar. They are the same which are supposed to hold the Shirazi robbers our Arab escort feared so much.

The position of the Arabs here is a miserable one. At war with these Shirazi, and pillaged by the Government which does nothing to protect them, they still cling to their little bits of cultivation wherever there is water near the hills. They are half the year nomadic, going south and west with the flocks, but in the spring return to the hills, plough up a few acres, and gather in a crop if possible before the tax-gatherer has found them out. The Persian Government is weak, and the garrison of Ram Hormuz is generally only sufficient for its duty of holding the town, but every now and then a reinforcement arrives from Ahwas or Fellahieh and then a raid is made under pretext of a collection of arrears, and horses and cattle are driven off in payment. This seems to be the plan throughout the province. We asked Abeyeh and the Khamîs Sheykh who came with him to-day to our camp, why they put themselves into this government trap by coming to the hills, when they might remain unmolested in the plain, or go where they would. "It is the soil," they exclaimed,

"the soil which is so rich. Where should we find another like it?" Indeed, the whole of this side of Persia seems meant to be a garden. Unlike the plains of Bagdad, which never can have been cultivated except with irrigation, the land here grows crops as in Europe, watered by the rain from heaven. The range of Bactiari hills by attracting clouds gives it this rare advantage.

Ram Hormuz itself must have been a great city once. Its position at a point where several rivers meet, and at the foot of a gorge, leading through the mountains to Shiraz, makes it naturally a place of importance, but it is little more now than a market for the Bedouin tribes and a military station.

The ferraz-bashi has been very amiable to us, though, like everyone else, averse to our further progress in the direction of Bebahan. The road, he says, is most unsafe, every village at war with its neighbour, and he dares not send troops with us even if he had them. There is, however, in the town, a certain potentate of the district first to be traversed, one Mohammed Jafar, Khan of the village of Sultanabad, who can protect us if any one can. To him we are to be recommended, and perhaps he will go on with us to-morrow. Abeyeh and his men, alas, can go no further. They are Arabs, and honest men, and camel drivers, and we have bid them good-bye with regret. But the people further on are Persian, and Persian and

Arabian are everywhere at odds. The idea is not agreeable of plunging into a hornet's nest, such as the country beyond us is described to be, but there is no help for it; to return is impossible. Every day becomes more and more fearfully hot, and our only hope now is the sea.

April 16.—We are refreshed by a good night's rest, such as we have not had since leaving Shustar. The ferraz-bashi called again this morning, walking out in the cool of sunrise, with a rose in his hand, to pay us his compliment. It seems to be the fashion among the Persians to go about with flowers, which they present to each other as polite offerings, and just now it is the season of roses. His Excellency informed us that Kaïd Mohammed Jafar would be ready to start for Sultanabad at the asr (about half past three), so we have made all our preparations for departure. Although the heat has been great, 96° at coolest, I have managed to make a sketch of Ram Hormuz, but nothing can do justice to its beauty. We have been more pleasantly received here, than anywhere else in Persia, and I feel sure we might make friends with the people if only we could speak their language. Travelling without knowing the language, is like walking with one's eyes shut.

April 17.—Mohammed Jafar arrived soon after four, and immediately we started. It was of importance that no time should be lost, for we had a river to cross, the Jerrahi which comes down

here from the mountains, and runs into the Persian Gulf, at Fellahieh. The country, till we came to it, was a difficult one for camels, being a very network of irrigation, with the channels crossed by treacherous little bridges. But the camels managed it all without accident. The river, of which we crossed two branches, flows over a bed of gravel, and was nowhere over our horses' girths. The water very cold, with melted snow, so that a delicious breeze of iced air followed the current. It was now past sundown, and we were anxious to be clear of the inclosed ground, before it should be absolutely night; but the Kaïd, tiresome man, had made an arrangement with some friends at a little village beyond the river to dine with them, and then go on in the night, a plan which did not at all suit us. Indeed it was impossible for us, with our camels, to halt in such a spot, where we could not have prevented them trampling the standing corn, and where we should have been helpless after dark. So declining, as politely as we could, the hospitality offered, we left the Kaïd to take his meal with his four horsemen, and pushed on alone. A villager was sent to show us the way, for we were not a mile from open ground, and night was falling and every minute precious, and we were resolved to reach it if we could. Road, however, it soon appeared there was none, for to reach the village, the Kaïd had taken us away from the main path, and as it grew darker we got more and more

entangled, in dykes and ditches. At one moment things seemed almost hopeless with us, a deep canal barring all further progress, and the villager who had brought us to this pass, profiting by the confusion, having run away. Fortunately Wilfrid perceived this flight in time, and riding after him fired his pistol in the air, and brought him back, when, under the compulsion of fear, he showed us where to cross. It was a poor ford, and some of the loads got wet, but beyond it we were on hard ground, and able now to wait in patience till the Kaïd and his men should come. Our shot seemed to have disturbed their feast, and we had not long to wait. Then we marched on in silence and utter darkness, but over a good road, till half-past one in this morning, when a loud barking of dogs announced our arrival at Sultanabad.

Here the Kaïd has a house to which he at once retired, leaving us to lie down in our cloaks, with our camels and horses, till daylight. He would willingly have invited us in, but we dare not leave our beasts and property, and now we have pitched our tent for the day, looping it up as usual, like an umbrella, to get every breath of air. When day dawned, we saw the Kaïd's house on one side of us, with three big canora trees overshadowing its entrance, and a walled garden at the back of it; on the other side the village with its barley fields and splendid grass crops. The houses of the village, built of sun-dried brick, are in a cluster together,

about two hundred yards from our mound; in front of them two or three black tents. The Kaïd's house is of considerable size, and appears to contain several court-yards. Sultanabad is itself a poor, mean-looking place, but if Hajji Mohammed is to be believed, a very nest of brigands, any one of whom for one single kran would kill a man, a real stronghold of robbers, and as such keeping the neighbouring country in terror. But I don't know what to think, for Hajji Mohammed believes every tale he hears, and the horsemen have been cramming him all the way along with stories of Mohammed Jafar's exploits, to enhance their chief's importance. How he does what he likes in the teeth of the government, who dare not punish him for having killed several of the Shahzade's people only a couple of years ago, how only he and his Sultanabadis can travel safely on the Bebahan road; and one can hardly blame poor Hajji Mohammed for expecting us to lead him into mischief, for we have before done so, and he thinks us reckless of danger. He is always lecturing us on prudence, though he himself is an odd combination of caution and rashness; he once at a critical moment wanted to stuff his revolver into an inaccessible bag, merely because the strap of the belt belonging to it was broken; another time he would have given his gun to a stranger to carry, had we not prevented his doing so. We spent this morning drinking tea and eating eggs and butter and a kid, and spreading wet

things to dry. Fortunately no serious damage has been done, and the fierce sun soon dried everything. A breeze sprang up, too, which helped the drying, and drove away the flies.

Hajji Mohammed was commissioned in the course of the morning to negociate terms with the Kaïd, who had been already sounding the cavass as to how much money could be got from us. He has really done it very well, and arranged that at Bebahan we are to pay the Kaïd one hundred krans. The great man at first asked for an abba or a cashmere shawl, but here Hajji Mohammed seems to have spoken with proper firmness.

We want to start at half-past four, and ought to pack now, but the servants are dawdling over the remains of the kid; they will not move till they have devoured the last morsel. Besides, they have got several girths to mend before we can load.

April 18.—We had a great deal of trouble to start at all yesterday afternoon, and after a difficult march we have got no farther than the village of Jazûn, about fifteen miles, which was reached at five A.M. this morning. At this rate we shall be a month getting to Bebahan, especially if the pass over the range of rocky hills we must cross, is as rugged as report says.
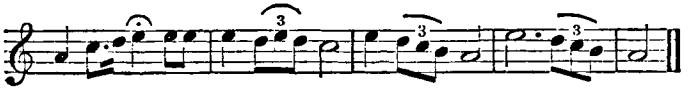
It turned out that the Kaïd himself did not intend to start with us, but to send his nephew with four people on foot, and follow himself with the four horsemen. He stood by as we loaded, and

then wished us good evening. When all was ready he asked us the favour to take with us a bundle of brown wool for Bebahan, and as it was not heavy we agreed. While Wilfrid turned to look at this package, a villager took the rifle off his delúl, but hastily put it back on Wilfrid's shouting "Stop thief," and ran off accompanied by the little crowd which had gathered round us, no doubt equally guilty at heart, and expecting blows. Then we started—it was about half-past five, a fine evening with a breeze, which, alas, died away at sunset, after which for two hours the air was extremely sultry. The Sultanabad field crops had to be crossed, but they were on dry land, with only a few easy ditches. Then we came to ground like a park, formerly cultivated, but now abandoned to nature; canora trees dotted about like handsome hawthorn trees, as if planted for ornament, the grass all crops run wild, splendid oats and barley now in the ear. Here and there an abandoned village, the walls gleaming red in the setting sun. Some of these were inhabited not very long since, and we were told various tales regarding them; from one place the inhabitants had gone away of their own accord quite lately to escape the tax-gatherer's next visit, leaving their corn standing; from another they had been driven by fire and sword, the soldiers burning the village after sacking it.

After about two hours we crossed the river Abn'l

Faris; it is not many yards wide nor is it deep, but the banks are steep and overgrown with trees and thick bushes. A narrow and nearly perpendicular path leads down to the ford. The camels have become skilful, and managed the scramble admirably; Shakran now carries our personal baggage, he has completely recovered, and is the cleverest of them all. Hajji Mohammed sat imperturbable on Wilfrid's delúl, and nearly got his head caught in the tangle of branches. After this we had another water or two to cross in the dark, the approaches to which were always announced by the croaking of frogs; then the chirping of grasshoppers replaced the croaking, and we were again on hard ground, the country a good deal up and down and broken up into ravines and fissures caused by rains. At ten o'clock, as far as we could make out by starlight, we were on good flat pasture land, real pasture not crops, and trees growing in groups as in a park, with a low ridge on the left. Here we halted for an hour to eat, and thought to have a nap; but Mohammed Jafar, who after all joined us some time before, would not hear of this. It would be dangerous; the Shirazi would swoop down from those hills to the north. He altogether declined remaining longer than necessary, and there was an earnestness in his manner that brought conviction with it; he really believed in the danger he talked of. The night was fine, and it would have been a pity not to make use of it; we pushed on over good

ground for an hour, and after that through mud, ditches, and frogs; about one o'clock a wide ditch completely barred further progress. We had for a good while been again among crops, so rank that wading through them was hard work, and on reaching this ditch, we all groped about, trying to find a passage for the camels. There was no sort of track; the horsemen had, in fact, got off the road and could not find it again, but there was no difficulty as to general direction, the Scorpion being our guide. Here, however, we were stuck fast by irrigation works, for at this particular spot the ditch was impracticable for camels, and all efforts in the dark to hit upon a ford were vain. The horsemen had already got across, and were shouting to us to follow; indeed, they had for the last hour guided us in a hap-hazard way by shouts and singing. One of them sang remarkably well, and kept up a sort of refrain:



But now they screamed, shouted, and sang to no purpose. We refused to waste any more time in a useless search, and sat down to wait for daylight. One of the khayal then returned and sat with us till four A.M. talking all the while to Hajji Mohammed about the Shirazi. We lay down and went to sleep. By half-past four we had found a

passage through the mud and water of the canal, and beyond it got on to desert ground, on which we passed several small detached oasis-like palm gardens. Half an hour's march further took us to Jazûn.

Jazûn is the only village left of many which once existed between Sultanabad and Bebahan, and whose ruins we have passed. They were deserted only a few years ago; the governors of the province, who found it impossible to collect taxes from them, having solved the difficulty by destroying them. This village is now a collection of little mud houses on the left bank of a natural stream of running water. It is surrounded by fields and groups of palm trees. Our horses are tethered out by long ropes fastened to palm trees, to feed on green barley; the camels are further off with Shafi. Shafi is an excellent worker, but he does not speak a word of Arabic, or I should tell him how well satisfied we are with him. We ourselves have encamped on the high bank backed by the stream, so that the villagers, who are a tiresome set of people, can only approach us on one side.

Jazûn as well as Sultanabad, belongs to the family of Mohammed Jafar. He has been sitting here talking to us through Hajji Mohammed. He tells us that his family, although they now no longer talk Arabic, are of the Safeyeh tribe, and came originally from Nejd, bringing their horses with them; and that a beautiful little white mare his

nephew rides, and which we admired yesterday evening, is a Hamdanyeh Simri. This mare is very small, 13.2 at most, but almost perfect; the head very fine with black nose, black round the eyes as if painted, *jebha* prominent, and *mitbakh* extremely fine; tail properly set on and carried, a good style of going, bones rather small, but legs apparently wiry and strong. One of the men rides a chestnut mare said to be Kehileh Sheykhah, about 14 hands, with four white feet, handsome head, and *mitbakh*. Mohammed Jafar mentioned that the particular breeds now possessed by his tribe are Hamdani Simri, Abeyan, Hadban, Wadnan, Meleyhan, Seglawi and Kehîlan. His own grey mare does not look thoroughbred, and he did not say anything about her. Mohammed Jafar now informed us that his nephew would proceed to Bebahan with us while he himself must go home, and he wished to have the whole sum of one hundred krans paid to him at once. After some talk he agreed to take seventy krans as his share, the rest to be given to his nephew at the end of the journey. He certainly gets the lion's share, but beggars cannot be choosers, and we are dependent on his goodwill to pass us through this part of the country, so that on the whole we ought to be glad that he has not asked more. We are altogether in a false position, too weak to insist upon our own terms, and our best plan is to march as fast as we can to Bebahan. Unfortunately there are not only

crags to cross, but the Kurdistan river has to be forded.

April 19.—A disagreeable twenty-four hours has passed, and we have scaled the crags, and escaped from the Jazûn people, who, it seems, had some evil design. But there is still the Kurdistan river between us and Bebahan.

We managed to set out from Jazûn soon after two o'clock in the afternoon, getting at once off the plain on to broken ground, which became more and more broken till at seven o'clock, when we halted, we were involved in a confused mass of hills apparently tossed together at random. We had crossed several small streams in deep ravines, and one narrow ledge of rock at the head of a ravine, which would have been unpleasant in the dark. Saw three or four gazelles, luckily not perceived by the greyhounds, for we cannot stop for sport. Sand-grouse, beebirds, plovers, and doves abounded. By seven o'clock we had done about ten miles and ascended over 600 feet, and Wilfrid proposed to halt for some hours. I was pleased, not liking passes and steeps in the dark, and we still had the pass itself before us, but Abdallah Khan, the Kaid's nephew, remonstrated and protested danger. Wilfrid, however, gave a peremptory order to unload the camels and we sat down to drink tea and make a frugal meal, and proposed afterwards to make aliek for the camels, as they have had a tiring march and cannot feed now in the night,

Before we had done eating Hajji Mohammed came to announce that forty Jazunis were following to attack and plunder us. Shafi, he said, had found this out, and told him, and he added that the welled Abdallah Khan had also been told of the plot and warned by the villagers not to stay with us. He called the youth, who confirmed the tale, as did all the others, the four men on foot who had come all the way with Abdallah. It seems probable that an attack really was contemplated, for Shafi could gain nothing by inventing such a story. But, as Wilfrid suggested, it may have been only a way of "expressing the polite feelings of the inhabitants of Jazûn." He however agreed that we ought to be on the watch and start as soon as possible—at this moment it was really impossible. Guns and revolvers were placed ready and sentinels posted, and Abdallah earnestly assured us he would stand by us. I think he would, he had been a much better guide than his uncle and was besides always ready to help and to wait for the camels at difficult places. After all this agitation, nothing happened except one or two false alarms, and I don't think I ever slept a sweeter sleep than between nine and two o'clock this night—no musquitoes and no flies.

It took us more than an hour to load in the dark, and we were not off till past three o'clock; at first feeling our way in single file, led by Abdallah, along a very broken and steep road. For part of the way

we had a little assistance from a red crescent moon. At a quarter to six, we had gained the highest point of the ridge, between 1600 and 1700 feet above the sea, making about 900 feet ascent from Jazun. Here there was at last an open view, down towards the Kurdistan river, with the palm village of Kaïkus plainly visible, and other palm villages beyond the river, and still further something vague, said to be Bebahan.

A gradual descent brought us on to a strip of plain, swarming with cuckoos, beebirds, doves, francolins, and sandgrouse, and dotted with canora trees, singly or in clumps, here and there fields of corn.

The sight of a mound commanding air, if air there should be, decided us to halt, and here we now are, waiting for the decline of day to set out again and ford the river. This plain by the river is hardly more than three hundred feet below the top of the pass we came over this morning.

Sunday, April 20.—Bebahan has been reached at last. Our final march, though not a long one, took us till towards midnight to accomplish, for we had the Kurdistan river to cross. This was the deepest of any we had forded, and there was a long delay in choosing a safe place; and then the water was up to our saddle bows, and running almost like a mill race. But the camels are now so used to water in every form from mud to torrents, that all marched bravely through, a portion only of the

luggage getting wet. Unfitted though the country has been in many ways for camels, we may nevertheless congratulate ourselves with the thought that with no other beasts of burden could we have got our luggage across the rivers at all. Loaded mules must have been swept away.

The Kurdistan forms the boundary on this side of the cultivated plain of Bebahan. Beyond it, we found ourselves travelling entirely between cornfields, and along a broad highway towards the capital of Khusistan. When two hours from the town we sent on Hajji Mohammed to announce us to the governor, but the governor was already asleep, and it was with some difficulty that we were admitted by the guard within the gate; nor was it possible in the utter darkness of the night to choose our ground within for camping. In the first open place we stopped, and as we were, lay down and slept (we care little now, how or where it is we lie, the ground is always soft as a feather-bed). Then, with the first light, we went on through the town and stopped again in front of the Seraï. Here I have been writing my journal and sketching the picturesque old palace, with its tottering minarets covered with storks' nests. "The Shahzade is still sleeping," say the sentries, "and will not be awakened."

CHAPTER VI.

"Last scene of all . . . . . .
A mere oblivion."—SHAKESPEARE.

A last rush through the sun—We arrive at Dilam on the Persian Gulf—Politics of the Gulf—A journey "in extremis"—Bushire—The End.

THE rest of our journey was little better than a feverish dream of heat and flies. After a day spent at Bebahan, where we were hospitably entertained by the Shahzade, Ahtesham ed-Daulah, a Persian nobleman of real good breeding, we recommenced our weary march, thinking only now to get down to Bushire alive.

The kind invitations of our host could not detain us, nor the polite attentions of his wives, nor the amiable visits of merchants, calendars, and other idle persons, who thronged our lodgings from dawn to dusk. The truth is Bebahan was like a furnace, and we felt that it was more than our strength would stand, to prolong our sufferings over another week. The lowlands of Persia, bordering on the Persian Gulf, are one of the most oven-like regions of the world, and though Bebahan lies nearly 1400 feet above the sea, it shares the climate of the Gulf.

We had now, besides, nothing further to fear in the way of robbers or marauders, and prepared ourselves for a last desperate rush through the sun to Bushire. The distance was hardly more than a hundred and twenty miles, but between Bebahan and Dilam there lay a region of hills, worse, according to report, than any we had yet passed, and absolutely impassable for camels. Still we had good reason to feel confident in the climbing powers of our beasts, and could not think of leaving them behind. Accordingly the next day we started, our courage well screwed to the sticking point of endurance, and under escort of three of the Shahzade's horsemen.

We set off at six in the afternoon, making the best of what daylight yet remained to get well started on our road. The difficulties are almost always greater close to the town, and once fairly on the beaten track, our camels would have no temptation to wander. From Bebahan to Dilam there are two considerable lines of ridges or hills—steps, as it were, and extremely precipitous ones, down to the sea coast. At first it was easy going for the camels, but presently, about an hour after dark, we found ourselves in broken ground, where, after stumbling on till half-past nine, we were brought to a dead halt by finding ourselves at the brink of a deep gulf, in which the road seemed to disappear. This made it necessary we should wait till daylight, and we lay down with our camels on the road, and

slept soundly till the first streak of dawn at half-past four. Then we discovered we had left the road, though only a few yards, and that the fissure before us was a sufficient reason for the halt we had made. The chief formation of these hills is not rock but clay, which being entirely without vegetation except in favoured spots, is furrowed into ravines and fissures by the action of the rain, making the district impassable except along the beaten track. We had risen some hundred feet from Bebahan, and so had nearly reached the summit of the first pass, where to our joy we saw something far away which we knew by instinct must be the sea. This raised our spirits, and we began our descent at once.

The path was very precipitous, and looking down from the edge it looked impossible that a camel should get down the thousand feet of zigzag which one could see plainly to the bottom. In some places rocks jutted out of the soil, making awkward narrow passes, and in others there were drops of three feet and more. Our horses of course made no difficulty, but watching the camels was nervous work, knowing as we did how little could be done to help them. Still we did what we could, going in front and calling them "Hao-hao," according to Bedouin fashion, which they understand so well. They know us now and trust in us, and so came bravely on. Even the Mecca delúl and the Safra, the young and giddy ones, have learned sobriety.

Three hours exactly it took to get down, and without accident. Another hour brought us to Zeytun, a pretty village on the river Zorah, with palm gardens and a good patch of cultivated land. At the river we stopped, exhausted already by the sun and overcome by the sight of the cool running water. Here we lay frizzling till the afternoon.

At four we crossed the river, as broad but a little less deep than the Kurdistan (both have gravelly bottoms), and resumed our march. A last cup of the ice-cold water was indulged in, but it could not slake my thirst, which nothing now can cure, though as a rule we drink nothing till the evening. Our march was a repetition of last night's, a long stumble half asleep along a break-neck road ending as before in an "impasse," and the rest of the night spent on the ground. We are plagued now, especially in these night halts, where we cannot see to choose a bed, with the horrible little spiked grass. Every bit of clothing we have is full of these points. These and the flies make it impossible to sleep by day, and we are both very weary, Wilfrid almost a skeleton.

April 23.—At a quarter past three, we again went on, by the light of a false dawn, the Scorpion, still in front of us. We know exactly now the rising of these stars in the south-eastern sky. The ascent this time was longer and more gradual, and the descent shorter than the former one, but quite as difficult. This second ridge is considerably lower

than the first, and at the foot of it our path followed a sort of valley in which we found a few pools of water. Then suddenly the gorge opened and we found ourselves at eight o'clock in the plain, with a village near us, and about eight miles away Dilam and the sea, simmering like melted lead to the horizon.

Eight miles, it sounds an easy march; but the heat, which now on the sea coast is more insufferable than ever, stopped us half way, and again we rigged up our tent on the plain, and lay under it till evening. Then we rode into Dilam. Our first question was for Captain Cameron, whose road should here have joined our own; but no Frank or stranger of any kind had passed that way.*

Dilam, like most maritime villages on the north-eastern shore of the Persian Gulf, is inhabited by people of Arab race, who have carried on a mixed trade of commerce and piracy there from time immemorial. Of the two, the piracy seems to have been the more profitable trade, for since its suppression by the English or rather Indian navy, the villages have languished. The Arab idea of piracy by sea, is exactly the same as that of ghazús by land. Any stranger not in alliance with the tribe, or under its protection, is held to be an enemy, and

* Captain Cameron never started at all from Bagdad on the expedition planned between us. Letters received, after we had left, recalled him to India, and he went there by steamer down the Tigris and Persian gulf.

his goods to be lawful prize. The greater part, however, of the armed expeditions, formerly made in the Gulf were directed by one tribe or village against another tribe or village, and were called in Arabic ghazús no less than if they had been made by land. The British Government, however, naturally found these ideas antiquated and the practice inconvenient, and in the interests of its commerce undertook, thirty or forty years ago, to keep the police of the Gulf. It compelled the Sheykhs of the various towns and villages to enter into what is called the Truce of the Gulf, and piracy has disappeared. Expeditions henceforth, if made at all, were to be made by land, and armed vessels, if met by an English cruiser, were confiscated. This sealed the fate of the coast villages, for the commerce of the Gulf alone being insufficient to support them, their inhabitants took up new quarters further inland, and from sailors became cultivators of the soil. The sea-port villages, where ports there are, still live on but poorly, and where there are no ports, the coast is abandoned. Dilam possesses no regular port, except for small boats, but the anchorage is good, and I believe the roadstead is considered one of the best in the Gulf. It has been talked of as the terminus of an Indo-Mediterranean railway.

Dilam now is a poor place of perhaps two hundred houses, but there are a few well-to-do people in it who presently came out to pay us their respects. The English name is well known on the coast, and there

was no danger now of any lack of courtesy. We were besieged at once with hospitable offers of entertainment for man and beast, but as usual preferred our camp outside the town. This we placed on a strip of sand dunes fronting the sea, and dividing it from the level plain which runs inland ten miles to the foot of the hills. This strip was scattered over with thorn bushes, in one of which a pair of cormorants were sitting. Our visitors remonstrated with us on choosing such a spot, assuring us that it was full of poisonous snakes, but this no doubt was nonsense. Among the rest came a wild-looking man with a gun, who told us he was a Beluch, and sent by the governor of Dilam as a guard, to protect us during the night. He had been in Turkish service, and was now in the Persian. This was our first meeting with anything Indian. We liked the man. In the evening, when it was dark and all were gone, Wilfrid gave himself the luxury of bathing in salt water.

We had now done what few if any Europeans had done before,—come all the way by land from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf: our journey had been over two thousand miles.

April 24.—There was now a great debate whether we should go on still by land for the other hundred miles which remained to us before we could reach Bushire, or whether, selling our camels here at Dilam, we should hire a sefineh, or native boat, to convey us with our things by sea. Wilfrid

was much taken with this last idea, thinking that the arrangement would save us from another week's toil in the overwhelming heat; but to me the sight of the rickety boats in which we should have had to trust ourselves and our horses to the mercy of the winds and waves, was sufficient to make me rejoice that the negociation about a sea journey failed. Then it was decided to march on as before. There seemed something sad, too, in abandoning our camels here, and taking to the ships of the sea where they could not follow us; and though we knew our parting from them was anyhow at hand, it was a respite to take them on. We had got, from our long care of them, to take great pride in their condition, and they were now fat and free from mange, a triumph of management which only those who have travelled far and loved their camels will understand.

On the afternoon of the 24th, having spent just twenty-four hours at Dilam, we struck our tents, and began our last march.

The country bordering the Persian Gulf is here a dead flat, little, if anything, raised above the level of the sea. It is very barren, and impregnated for the most part with saltpetre, while here and there broad tidal creeks intersect it, wherever a stream runs into it from the hills. These formed the only obstacle to our march, and we travelled more easily now by night, for there began to be a moon.

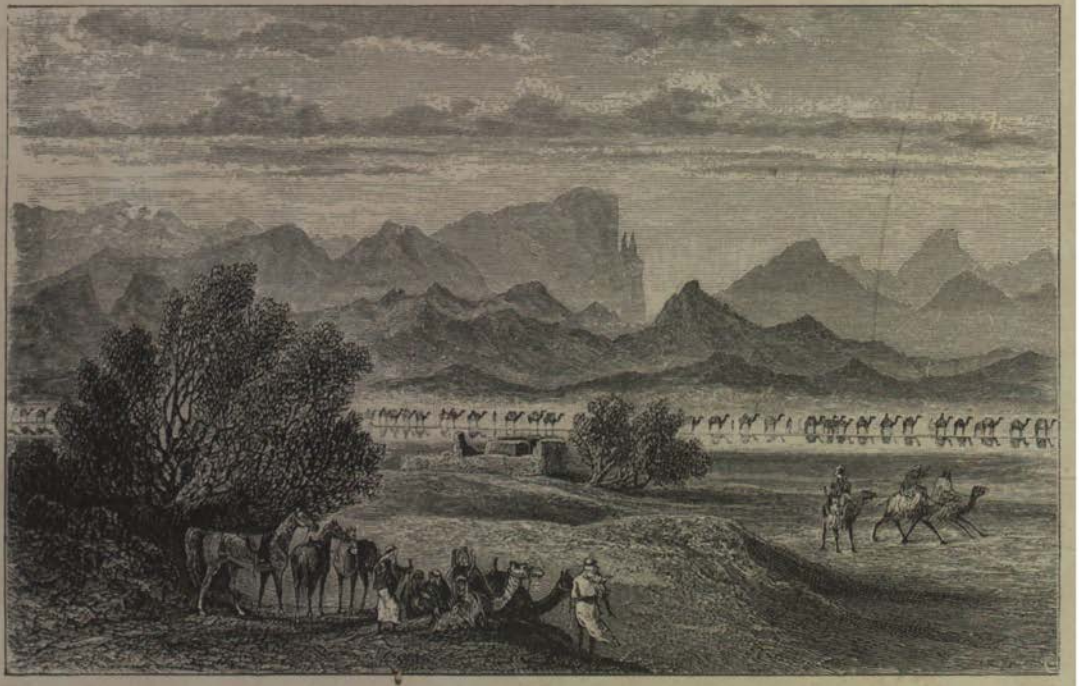
I hurry over these last days, indeed the heat and the march absorbed all our faculties and thought. Our plan was to start about three o'clock in the afternoon, when usually a light breeze sprang up from the south-east, and travel on till the moon set, or till some creek barred passage for the night; then sleep upon the ground till dawn, and on again till eight. By that hour the sun had become a fierce and importunate thing, beating as if with a weight upon our heads; and, choosing a place where there was some show of pasture, we unloaded and turned out our beasts to graze, and then rigged up the tent and lay gasping under it in the breathless air, supporting life with tea. Hajji Mohammed now was only capable of tea-making. In all things else he had become idiotic, sitting half back on his beast, or in the tent, ejaculating: "Allah kerim," God is generous. Our tempers all were severely tried, and we could do little now to help each other. Ghadr and Rahim, Arab and Persian, were at daggers drawn. The horses' backs for the first time were getting sore, and the dogs were run nearly off the soles of their feet. Shiekha and Sayad in a course in which they killed a gazelle were injured, the former having cut her feet badly on the glazed edges of some dry cracked mud she had galloped over. Lastly, and this was a terrible grief, one of the camels being badly loaded had slipped its pack, and in the fall Rasham had been crushed. The falcon's leg was broken, and for the last three days

of our journey, it seemed impossible he should live, clinging as he was obliged to do by one leg to the saddle. It was all like a night-mare, with no redeeming feature but that we knew now the end was close at hand.

On the 25th we reached Gunawa, on the 26th Bender Rik and on the 27th, Rohalla, where we crossed the river, and then marching on without halting through the night, we forded a shallow arm of the sea, and found ourselves the next morning about dawn upon the edge of the Khor, or salt lake of Bushire. As the sun rose Bushire itself was before us, and our long march was at an end.

It was now necessary to abandon our nomadic life, and shipping all our goods in a "baggara," and leaving the unloaded camels to be driven round at low tide to the neck of the Bushire peninsula, we put ourselves and our dogs and bird on board, and with a fresh breeze ran in two hours to the custom-house landing. There, taken for Arabs, we had long to wait, but in the end procuring porters, walked in procession through the streets to the Residency. When we arrived at the door of the Residency, the well-dressed Sepoys in their smart European uniforms, barred us the door with their muskets. They refused to believe that such vagabonds, blackened with the sun, and grimed with long sleeping on the ground, were English gentlefolks or honest people of any sort.

APPENDIX.



GRANITE RANGE OF JEBEL SHAMMAR. EFFECT OF MIRAGE

[*Vol. II., p.* 234.

APPENDIX.

NOTES ON THE PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY OF NORTHERN ARABIA.

Arabia between latitude 34° and latitude 29°, may be described in general terms as a plain of sand-stone grit, or gravel, unbroken by any considerable range of hills, or by any continuous watercourse, if we except the Wady Hauran, which traverses it in the extreme north and in rainy seasons forms a succession of pools from the Harra, east of Jebel Hauran, to the Euphrates. This stony plain is known to the Bedouins as the Hamád or "Plain" *par excellence;* and though for the most part destitute of perennial pasture, or of water above ground, there are certain districts in it better provided which form their winter quarters. Such are the above mentioned Wady Hauran, the resort of the Bisshr Anazeh, and the Wady-er-Rothy, of the Daffir, and Shammar. A few wells would seem to exist on the line of certain ancient routes, traversing the Hamád from various points on the Euphrates, and these form centres of attraction to the tribes. But their immediate neighbourhood is invariably barren, having been pitilessly browsed down for centuries. Routes of this sort connect Kâf with Shedadi, Meskakeh with Suk-esh-Shiôkh, and Jôf with Maan. But the

best frequented of them and that best supplied with water is the great Haj road from Meshhed Ali to Jebel Shammar, called the road of Zobeydeh. On this wells and reservoirs were constructed in the 9th century, by the widow of Harun-el-Rashid, and khâns, for the convenience of pilgrims, the ruins of which still exist.

The *Hamád*, starting from the level of the Euphrates, rises rapidly for a few miles through a district much intersected by ravines, to an upper plateau, which thenceforward has a fairly regular slope upwards towards the west and south of 8 to 10 feet per mile. The drainage of the plain would not, however, seem to be continuous towards the river; but to terminate in certain sandy hollows, known by the name *Buttn Jôf* or *Bekka*, all signifying belly or receptacle, which may in former times have been lakes or small inland seas. These do not now at any time of the year hold water above ground, but at the depth of a few feet below the surface it may be found in wells. Such are the Buttn on the Haj road, in which the Wady-er-Rothy terminates, the oases of Taïbetism and Jobba in the south, and I believe that of Teyma in the west; but the most remarkable of them all is without comparison the so-called Wady and Jôf of Sirhan.

The *Wady Sirhan* bisects northern Arabia in a line parallel with the Euphrates and with the coast lines of the Peninsula, that is to say, nearly from N.W. to S.E. Immediately east and north of it the Hamád reaches its highest level, 2,500 feet above the sea; and the cliffs bounding it on this side are rather abrupt, corresponding, as I am inclined to think, with the general formation of the plain. This consists of a series of shelves set one above the other, with their edges opposed to the general slope; a formation very evident on the Haj road, where the traveller from Nejd, though in reality descending at a general rate of more than eight feet to the mile, is tempted

to fancy himself on an ascending road, owing to the frequent *Akabas* or steep cliffs he has to climb. I am inclined, therefore, to believe that the Wady Sirhan and the Jôf receive their drainage principally from the west, and that there is a second great watershed to the plain in the volcanic region, which, according to Guarmani, continues the Hauran ridge southwards to Tabuk. East of the Wady Sirhan I was struck by the absence of large tributary wadys such as one would expect if the area drained was a wide one. The Wady Sirhan, however, in the days when it was an inland sea, must have received contributions from all sides. It lies as a trough between two watersheds in the plain, and may have been supplied from Jebel Aja in the south, as it is still supplied from Jebel Hauran in the north. Its general level below that of the adjacent plain eastwards, is about 500 feet, and the plain may rise again still higher to the west.

Be this as it may, one thing is clear, namely, that the Wady was and is the great central receptacle of the plain, and corresponds pretty closely with its neighbour, the still existing Dead Sea, while the Wady-er-Rajel entering it from the north, holds towards it the position of the Jordan. Water in the Wady Sirhan is found at a nearly uniform level of 1850 feet; and this rule applies to that part of it which is known as the Jôf as well as to the rest. The abundance of water obtainable from its wells along a line extending 300 miles from the frontier of Syria, to within 200 of the frontier of Nejd, points out Wady Sirhan as the natural high road of Northern Arabia, and such it must from the earliest times have been. It is probable that in the days when Arabia was more populous than now, villages existed in it at intervals from Ezrak to Jôf. At present, the wells of these only remain, if we except the twin oases of Kâf and Ithery, still preserved in life by the salt lakes which supply them with an article

of trade. These are but poor places, and their population can hardly exceed two hundred souls.

Jôf and Meskakeh are still flourishing towns, but I have reason to think their population has been over estimated by Mr. Palgrave. I cannot put the total number of houses in Jôf at more than 500, nor in Meskakeh at more than 600, while 100 houses are an ample allowance for Kara and the other hamlets of the Jôf oasis. This would give us a census of hardly 8,000 souls, whereas Mr. Palgrave puts it at 40,000. I do not, however, pretend to accuracy on this point.

With regard to the geology of the Hamád and the adjacent districts north of the Nefûd, I believe that sandstone is throughout the principal element. In the extreme north, indeed, limestone takes its place or conglomerate; but, with the exception of a single district about 100 miles south of Meshhed Alí on the Haj road, I do not think our route crossed any true calcareous rock. The cliffs which form the eastern boundary of the Wady Sirhan are, I think, all of sandstone, south at any rate of Jebel Mizmeh, as are certainly the hills of Jôf and Meskakeh, the rocks of Aalem and Jobba, and all the outlying peaks and ridges north-west of Haïl. These have been described as basaltic or of dark granite, the mistake arising from their colour which, though very varied, is in many instances black. The particular form of sandstone in which iron occurs, seems indeed to acquire a dark weathering with exposure, and unless closely examined, has a volcanic look. I do not, however, believe that south of latitude 31° the volcanic stones of the Haura are really met with; unless indeed it be west of the Wady Sirhan. Jebel Mizmeh, the highest point east of it, is alone perhaps basaltic. The whole of the Jôf district reminded me geologically of the sandstone formation of Sinai, both in the excentric outline of its rocks, which are often mushroom shaped, and in

their colour, where purple, violet, dark red, orange, white and even blue and green are found, the harder rock assuming generally an upper weathering of black. I can state positively that nothing basaltic occurs on the road between Jôf and Jebel Aja. Of Jebel Mizmeh I am less certain, as I did not actually touch the stone, but, if volcanic it be, it is the extreme limit of the Harra southwards. The tells of Kâf I certainly took to be of basalt when I passed them. But I did not then consider how easily I might be mistaken. On the whole I am inclined to place latitude 31° as the boundary of the volcanic district east of the Wady.

The bed of the Wady Sirhan is principally of sand, though in some places there is a clayey deposit sufficient to form subbkhas, or salt lakes, notably at Kâf and Ithery. About three days' journey E.S.E. of Ithery, I heard of quicksands, but did not myself cross any ground holding water. The sand of the Wady Sirhan, like that of all the hollows both of the Hamád and of northern Nejd, is nearly white, and has little to distinguish it from the ordinary sand of the sea shore, or of the Isthmus of Suez. It is far less fertile than the red sand of the Nefûd, and is more easily affected by the wind. The ghada is found growing wherever the sand is pure, and I noticed it as far north as Kâf. In some parts of the Wady which appear to hold water in rainy seasons, there is much saltpetre on the surface, and there the vegetation is rank, but of little value as pasture. In the pure white sand, little else but the ghada grows. Wady Sirhan is the summer quarters of the Sherarat.

The *Harra* is a high region of black volcanic boulders too well known to need description. It begins as far north as the latitude of Damascus, and stretches from the foot of the Hauran hills eastward for some fifty miles, when it gives place to the Hamád. Southwards it extends to Kâf,

and forms the water shed of the plain east of the Wady Sirhan. According to Guarmani, it is found again west of the Wady, as far south as Tebuk. The eastern watershed of the Harra would seem with the Jebel Hauran to feed the Wady-er-Rajel, a bed sometimes containing running water, and on its opposite slope the Wady Hauran which reaches the Euphrates. The Harra is more plentifully supplied with water than the Hamád, and has a reputation of fertility wherever the soil is uncovered by the boulders.

The Nefûd.—A little north of latitude 29°, the Hamád, which has to this point been a bare plain of gravel broken only by occasional hollows, the beds of ancient seas, suddenly becomes heaped over with high ridges of pure red sand. The transition from the smooth hard plain to the broken dunes of the Nefûd is very startling. The sand rises abruptly from the plain without any transition whatever; and it is easy to see that the plain is not really changed but only hidden from the eye by a super-incumbent mass. Its edge is so well defined that it is hardly an exaggeration to say that with one foot a man may stand upon the Hamád, and with the other on the Nefûd; nor is there much irregularity in its outline. The limit of the sand for several hundred miles runs almost evenly from east to west, and it is only at these extremities that it becomes broken and irregular. Such, at least, I believe to be the case; and if, as seems probable, the whole drift of sand has been shaped by prevailing easterly winds, the phenomenon is less strange than might be thought.

The great Nefûd of Northern Arabia extends from the wells of Lina in the east to Teyma in the west, and from the edge of the Jôf basin in the north to the foot of Jebel Aja in the south. In its greatest breadth it is 150 miles, and in its greatest length 400 miles, but the whole of this

is not continuous sand. The extreme eastern portion (and perhaps also the extreme western) is but a series of long strips, from half a mile to five miles in breadth, running parallel to each other, and separated by intervening strips of solid plain. Nor is the sand everywhere of equal depth; the intermittent Nefûds are comparatively shallow, and would seem to bear a certain proportion in depth to the breadth of the strips. Thus the highest sand ridge crossed by the Haj road is barely eighty feet, while others are but fifty and twenty feet. The continuous Nefûd on the other hand, between Jôf and Haïl, has a depth of at least two hundred feet. The intermittent ridges may possibly suggest an explanation of the original formation of the mass. It would seem as if the wind acting upon the sand drove it at first into lines, and that, as these grew broader and deeper, they at last filled up the intervening space, and formed themselves into a continuous mass at their lee end. If this be the case, the intermittent ridges show the direction in which the solid mass of sand is advancing, the direction, that is, contrary to that of the wind. I leave this deduction, however, to more competent persons than myself to draw, contenting myself with recording the fact.

The red sand of the Nefûd is of a different texture from the ordinary white sand of the desert, and seems to obey mechanical laws of its own. It is coarser in texture and far less volatile, and I am inclined to think that the ordinary light winds which vary sandy surfaces elsewhere leave it very little affected. A strong wind alone, amounting to a gale, could raise it high in the air. It is remarkable that whereas the light white sand is generally found in low hollows, or on the lee side of hills, the red sand of the Nefûd has been heaped up into a lofty mass high above the highest part of the plain. The Hamád where the Nefûd begins is 2,200 feet above the sea. No traveller

can see this desert of red sand for the first time without acknowledging its individuality. It is as little like the ordinary sand dunes of the desert, as a glacier is like an ordinary snow field in the Alps. It seems, like the glacier, to have a law of being peculiar to itself, a law of increase, of motion, almost of life. One is struck with these in traversing it, and one seems to recognise an organism.

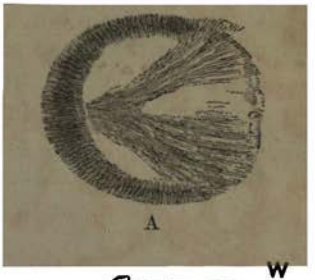
The most remarkable phenomenon of the Nefûd are the long lines of horse-hoof shaped hollows, called *fuljes*, with which its surface is pitted; these are only observable



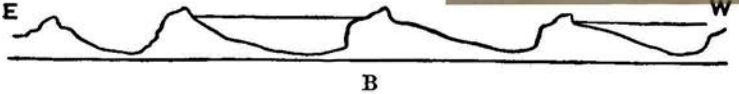
where the sand has attained a depth of from 80 to 100 feet, and are consequently seldom found in the intermittent portion of the Nefûd; while it is remarkable that in the very centre of all, where it might be supposed the sand was deepest, the fuljes are less deep than towards the northern and southern edges, while the lines in which they run become more regular. Indeed, for some miles on either side of Aalem, which marks the centre of the Nefûd, there are no large fuljes; but their strings are so regular as to form, with the intervening spaces, a kind of shallow ridge and furrow running nearly east and west, and not altogether unlike, on a gigantic scale, those ridges in which meadows are sometimes laid down in England. From the top of Aalem this formation was very distinct.

The fuljes themselves are singularly uniform in shape, though varying in size. They represent very closely horse tracks on an enormous scale, that is to say a half-circle, deep at the curved end or toe, and shelving up to the level of the plain at the square end or heel. The sides of the

former are as precipitous as it is in the nature of sand to be, and they terminate abruptly where they meet the floor of the fulj. This floor, sloping downwards towards the toe at an angle of about 70°, and scored with water-courses converging to a centre, roughly represents the frog, so that in plan the whole hollow would appear as in the woodcut A; while in section it would appear as in woodcut B. It is necessary, therefore, in entering a fulj on horseback, or with camels, to approach it from the east; but on foot one can slip down the sand at any point. I noticed that just west of the deep fuljes there is generally a high mound of sand,



A



B

which adds considerably to their apparent depth and to the delusion of their being artificial in their origin, as though the sand scooped out has been thrown up by a digger.

The size and depth of the fuljes varies greatly; some are, as it were, rudimentary only, while others attain a depth of 200 feet and more. The deepest of those I measured proved to be 280 feet, including the sand hill, which may have been 60 feet above the general level of the plain; its width seemed about a quarter of a mile. At the bottom of these deep fuljes, solid ground is reached, and there is generally a stony deposit there, such as I have often noticed in sandy places where water has stood. This bare space is seldom more than a few paces in diameter. I heard of, but did not see, one which contained a well. The wells of Shagik do not stand in a fulj, but in a valley clear of sand, and those of Jobba in a broad

circular basin 400 feet below the level of the Nefûd. The fuljes, I have said, run in strings irregularly from east to west, corresponding in this with their individual direction.* They are most regularly placed in the neighbourhood of the rocks of Aalem, but their size there is less than either north or south of it. The shape of the fuljes seems unaffected by the solid ground beneath, for at the rocks of Ghota there is a large fulj pierced by the rocks, but which otherwise retains its semicircular form.

The physical features of the Nefûd, whether they be ridges or mounds or fuljes, appear to be permanent in their character. The red sand of which they are composed is less volatile than the common sand of the desert and, except on the summits of the mounds and ridges, seems little affected by the wind. It is everywhere, except in such positions, sprinkled over with brushwood ghada trees and tufts of grass. The sides of the fuljes especially are well clothed, and this could hardly be the case if they were liable to change with a change of wind. In the Nefûd between Jobba and Igneh I noticed well defined sheep tracks ascending the steep slopes of the fuljes spirally, and these I was assured were by no means recent. Moreover, the levelled track made according to tradition by Abu Zeyd is still discernible in places where cuttings were originally made. Sticks and stones left in the Nefûd by travellers, the bones of camels and even their droppings, remain for years uncovered, and those who cross do so by the knowledge of landmarks constantly the same. I am inclined to think, then, that the Nefûds represent a state of comparative repose in Nature. Either the prevailing winds which heaped them up formerly are less violent now than then, or the fuljes are due to exceptional causes which have not occurred for

* The exact direction of these strings it is difficult to determine accurately; but perhaps E. by S. and W. by N. may be accepted as nearest the truth.

many years. That wind in some form, and at some time, has been their cause I do not doubt, but the exact method of its action I will not affect to determine. Mr. Blandford, an authority on these subjects, suggests that the fuljes are spaces still unfilled with sand; and if this be so, the strings of fuljes may in reality mark the site of such bare strips as one finds in the intermittent Nefûds. It is conceivable that as the spaces between the sand ridges grew narrower, the wind blocked between them acquired such a rotatory motion as to have thrown bridges of sand across, and so, little by little, filled up all spaces but these. But to me no theory that has been suggested is quite satisfactory. What cause is it that keeps the floors of the deeper fuljes bare; floors so narrow that it would seem a single gale should obliterate them, or even the gradual slipping of the sand slopes above them? There must be some continuous cause to keep these bare. Yet where is the cause now in action sufficient to have heaped up such walls or dug out such pits?

Another strange phenomenon is that of such places as Jobba. There, in the middle of the Nefûd, without apparent reason, the sand is pushed high back on all sides, from a low central plain of bare ground three or four miles across. North, south, east, and west the sand rises round it in mountains 400 and 500 feet high, but the plain itself is bare as a threshing-floor. It would seem as if this red sand could not rest in a hollow place, and that the fact of Jobba's low level alone kept it free. Jobba, if cleared of sand all round, would, I have no doubt, present the same feature as Jôf or Taïbetism. It would appear as a basin sunk in the plain, an ancient receptacle of the drainage from Mount Aja. Has it only in recent times been surrounded thus with sand? There is a tradition still extant there of running water.

Jebel Shammar.—A little north of latitude 29°, the

Nefûd ceases as suddenly as it began. The stony plain reappears unchanged geologically, but more broken by the proximity of a lofty range of hills, the Jebel Aja. Between these, however, and the sand, there is an interval of at least five miles where the soil is of sandstone, mostly red, the material out of which the Nefûd sand was made, but mixed with a still coarser sand washed down from the granite range. This rises rapidly to the foot of the hills. There, with little preliminary warning, we come upon unmistakeable red granite cropping in huge rounded masses out of the plain, and rising to a height of 1000 and 1500 feet. The shape of these rocks is very fantastic, boulder being set on boulder in enormous pinnacles; and I noticed that many of them were pierced with those round holes one finds in granite. The texture of the rock is coarse, and precisely similar to that of Jebel Musa in the Sinaï peninsula, as is the scanty vegetation with which the wadys are clothed. There are the same thorny acacia, and the wild palm, and the caper plant as there, and I heard of the same animals inhabiting the hills.

The *Jebel Aja* range has a main direction of E. by N. and W. by S. Of this I am convinced by the observations I was able to take when approaching it from the N.W. The weather was clear and I was able to see its peaks running for many miles in the direction mentioned. With regard to its length I should put it, by the accounts I heard, at something like 100 miles, and its average breadth may possibly be 10 or 15. In this I differ from the German geographers, who give Jebel Aja a direction of N.E. by S.W., on the authority I believe of Wallin. But as they also place Haïl on the southern slope of the hills, a gross error, I do not consider the discrepancy as of any importance.

Of *Jebel Selman* I can only speak according to the distant view I had of it. But I should be much surprised

to learn that any portion of it passed west of the latitude of Haïl. That portion of it visible from Haïl certainly lies to the S.E., and at an apparent distance of 30 miles, with no indication of its being continued westwards. It is by all accounts of the same rock (red granite) as Jebel Aja.

Between Jebel Selman and the Nefûd lie several isolated hills rising from broken ground. All these are of the sandstone formation of the Hamâd, and have no geological connection with Aja or Selman. Such are Jebels Jildiyeh, Yatubb, and Jilfeh, Jildiyeh the tallest having a height of perhaps 3800 feet above the sea, or 300 above Haïl.

Haïl lies due east of the extreme eastern buttress of Jebel Aja, and not south of it as has been supposed. Both it and Kefar, as indeed all the towns and villages of the district, lie in a single broad wady, draining the south-eastern rocks of Aja, and sweeping round them northwards to the Nefûd. The height of Haïl is 3,500 feet above the sea, and the plain rises southwards behind it, almost imperceptibly. The small isolated hills close to the town, belong, I think, geologically to the granite range. The main drainage of the plain south of Haïl would seem to be received by the Wady Hannasy, whose course is north, so that the highest part of the plain is probably between Aja and Selman, and may be as much as 4,000 feet above the sea. This, I take it, is the highest plateau of Arabia—as Aja is its highest mountain, 5000 to 5600 feet,—an all sufficient reason for including Jebel Shammar in the term Nejd or Highland.

I feel that I am taking a very serious liberty with geographers in placing Haïl 60 miles farther south than where it is found in our modern maps. I consider, however, that until its position has been scientifically determined, I am justified in doing this by the fact, that my dead reckoning gave it this position, not only according to the out journey, but by the return one, measured from Meshhed

Ali. I am so much in the habit of measuring distances by a rough computation of pace and time, that I doubt if I am much out in the present instance. On this, however, I forbear to dogmatise.

I had hoped to conclude this sketch with a list of plants found in the Nefûd. But our small collection has proved to be so pulverised by its journey, that Sir Joseph Hooker, who kindly undertook to look over it, has been able to identify hardly half-a-dozen specimens.

Of wild animals, I have ascertained the existence of the ostrich, the leopard, the wolf, the fox, the hyæna, the hare, the jerboa, the white antelope, and the gazelle in the Nefûd; and of the ibex and the marmot in Jebel Aja. Of these it may be remarked that the ostrich is the most valuable and perhaps the most rare; I had not the luck to see a single wild specimen, though once a fresh egg was brought me. Neither did I see, except in confinement, the white antelope (Oryx beatrix), which is the most important quadruped of the Nefûd. This antelope frequents every part of the red sand desert, and I found its track quite one hundred miles from any spring, so that the Arabs may be pardoned for affirming that it never drinks. The hare too is found and plentifully throughout; but the gazelle haunts only the outskirts within reach of the hills or of wells where the Arabs are accustomed to water their flocks. The same may be said of the wolf, the fox, and the hyæna, which seem fairly abundant. The tracks of these grew frequent as we approached Jebel Aja, and it may be assumed that it is there they have their lairs, making use of the Nefûd as a hunting ground. The Jebel Aja, a granite range not less than 5,500 feet above the sea, furnishes the water required by these animals, not indeed in streams, for none such are found in the range, but in springs and natural tanks where rain water is stored. These seem by all accounts to be fairly numerous; and if

so, the ancient tradition of a wild horse having also been found in the Nefûd, may not be so improbable as at first sight it seems. There is certainly pasture and good pasture for the horse in every part of it. The sheep of the Nefûd requires water but once in a month, and the Nefûd horse may have required no more.

Of reptiles the Nefûd boasts by all accounts the horned viper and the cobra, besides the harmless grey snake called Suliman, which is common everywhere. There are also immense numbers of lizards.

Birds are less numerous, but I noticed the frilled bustard Houbara, and one or two hawks and buzzards. A large black buzzard was especially plentiful. The Bedouins of Nejd train the Lanner falcon, the only noble hawk they possess, to take hares and bustards. In the Nefûd, most of the common desert birds are found, the desert lark, the wheatear, and a kind of wren which inhabits the ghada and yerta bushes.

Of insects I noticed the dragon-fly, several beetles, the common house-fly, and ants, whose nests, made of some glutinous substance mixed with sand, may be seen under these bushes. I was also interested at finding, sunning itself on the rocks of Aalem, a specimen of the painted lady butterfly, so well known for its adventurous flights. This insect could not well have been bred at any nearer point than Syria or the Euphrates, respectively 400 and 300 miles distant. Fleas do not exist beyond the Nefûd, and our dogs became free of them as soon as we reached Haïl. Locusts were incredibly numerous everywhere, and formed the chief article of food for man, beast, and bird. They are of two colours, red and green, the latter being I believe the male, while the former is the female. They both are excellent eating, but the red locust is preferred.

Sand-storms are probably less common in the Nefûd than in deserts where the sand is white, for reasons already

named; nor do the Bedouins seem much to dread them. They are only dangerous where they last long enough to delay travellers far from home beyond the time calculated on for their supplies. No tales are told of caravans overwhelmed or even single persons. Those who perish in the Nefûd perish of thirst. I made particular inquiries as to the simoom or poisonous wind mentioned by Mr. Palgrave, but could gain no information respecting it.

In the Jebel Aja an ibex is found, specimens of which I saw at Haïl, and a mountain gazelle, and I heard of a leopard, probably the same as that found in Sinaï. The only animal there, which may be new, is one described to me as the Webber, an animal of the size of the hare, which climbs the wild palms and eats the dates. It is described as sitting on its legs and whistling, and from the description I judged it to be a marmot or a coney (hierax). But Lord Lilford, whom I spoke to on the subject, assures me it is in all probability the Lophiomys Imhausii.

W. S. B.



LOPHIOMYS IMHAUSII.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE RISE AND DECLINE OF WAHHABISM IN ARABIA.

COMPILED PRINCIPALLY FROM MATERIALS SUPPLIED BY LT.-COLONEL E. C. ROSS, H.M.'s RESIDENT AT BUSHIRE.

AT the beginning of last century, Nejd, and Arabia generally, with the exception of Oman, Yemen, and Hejaz, was divided into a number of independent districts or townships, each ruled by a tribal chief on the principle already explained of self-government under Bedouin protection. Religion, except in its primitive Arabian form, was almost forgotten by the townspeople, and little if any connection was kept up between them and the rest of the Mahometan world.

In 1691, however, Mohammed Ibn Abd-el-Wahhab, founder of the Wahhabi sect, was born at Eiyanah in Aared, his father being of the Ibn Temim tribe, the same which till lately held power in Jebel Shammar. In his youth he went to Bussorah, and perhaps to Damascus, to study religious law, and after making the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina returned to his native country, and soon after married in the village of Horeylama near Deriyeh. There and at Eyaneh he began his preaching, and about the year 1742 succeeded in converting Mohammed Ibn Saoud, Emir of Deriyeh, the principal town of Aared.

The chief features of his teaching were :—

1st. The re-establishment of Mahometan beliefs as taught

by the Koran, and the rejection of those other beliefs accepted by the Sunis on tradition.

2nd. A denial of all spiritual authority to the Ottoman or any other Caliph, and of all special respect due to sherifs, saints, dervishes, or other persons.

3rd. The restoration of discipline in the matter of prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage.

4th. A strict prohibition of wine, tobacco, games of chance, magic, silk and gold in dress, and of tombstones for the dead.

Ibn Abd-el-Wahhab lived to an advanced age at Deriyeh, and died in 1787.

Mohammed Ibn Saoud, the first Wahhabi Emir, belonged to the Mesalikh tribe of Anazeh, itself an offshoot of the Welled Ali of western Nejd (deriving, according to the account of the Ibn Saouds themselves, from the Beni Bekr Wail, through Maane Ibn Rabiia, king of Nejd, Hasa, and Oman in the 15th century). He embraced the tenets of Abd-el-Wahhab, as has been said, in the year 1742, and was followed in his conversion by many of the inhabitants of Deriyeh and the neighbouring districts, who at last so swelled the number of Ibn Saoud's adherents, that he became the head of the reformed religion, and according to the Wahhabi pretensions the head of all Islam. Guided by the counsels of Ibn Abd-el-Wahhab, and carried forward on the wave of the new teaching, he gradually established his authority over all Aared and eventually over the greater part of Nejd. His hardest contests there were with the people of Riad, who, under their Sheykh, Mohammed Ibn Daus, long held out, and with the Ibn Ghureyr (Areyr or Aruk), Sheykhs of the Beni Khaled. These latter, who owned the districts of Hasa and Katif, though forced to tribute, have always been hostile to the Ibn Saouds, and are so at the present day. Another opponent, bitterly hostile to the new religion, was the Emir's brother, Theni-

yan, whose descendants still belong to the anti-Wahhabi faction in Aared. Mohammed Ibn Saoud died in 1765 and was succeeded by his son Abdel Aziz.

Abd-el-Aziz Ibn Saoud, a man of energy and ambition, completed the subjugation of Nejd and Hasa, and carried the Wahhabi arms as far northwards as Bussorah, and even it would seem to Mesopotamia and the Sinjar Hills. These latter raids so greatly alarmed the government of the Sultan, that in 1798 a Turkish expeditionary force was sent by land from Bagdad into Hasa, under the command of one Ali Pasha, secretary to Suliman Pasha the Turkish Valy. It consisted of 4000 or 5000 regular infantry, with artillery, and a large contingent of Bedouin Arabs collected from the Montefik, Daffir, and other tribes hostile to the Wahhabi power. These marched down the coast and took possession of the greater part of Hasa, but having failed to reduce Hofhuf, a fortified town, were returning northwards when their retreat was intercepted by Saoud, the Emir's son, who took up a position under the walls of Taj. A battle was then imminent, but it was averted by the mediation of the Arab Sheykhs, and Ali Pasha was allowed to continue his retreat to Bussorah, while Saoud retook possession of Hasa and punished those who had submitted to the Turks. This affair contributed much to the extension and renown of the Wahhabi power; and offers of submission came in from all sides. The Emir, nevertheless, thought it prudent to endeavour to conciliate the Turkish Valy, and despatched horses and other valuable presents to Bagdad.

The Wahhabi State was now become a regular Government, with a centralised administration, a system of tax instead of tribute, and a standing army which marched under the command of Saoud Ibn Saoud, the Emir's eldest son. The Emir, Abd-el-Aziz himself, appears to have been a man of peace, simple in his dress and habits, and extremely devout. Saoud, however, was a warrior, and it was

through him that the Wahhabis pushed their fortunes. There seems, nevertheless, to have been always a strong party of opposition in the desert, where the Bedouins clung to the traditions of their independence and chafed under the religious discipline imposed on them. Kasim and Jebel Shammar, both of them centres of Bedouin life, never accepted the Wahhabi tenets with any enthusiasm, and the people of Hasa, an industrious race standing in close commercial relations with Persia, accepted the rule of the Ibn Saouds only on compulsion. Southern Nejd alone seems to have been fanatically Wahhabi, but their fanaticism was their strength and long carried all before it.

In 1799, Saoud made his first pilgrimage to Mecca, at the head of 4000 armed followers, and in the following year he repeated the act of piety. Passage through Nejd, however, seems to have been forbidden to the Shiah pilgrims whom the Wahhabis regarded as infidels, and a violent feeling was roused against the Wahhabis in Persia and in the Pashalik of Bagdad, where most of the inhabitants are Shiahs. It ended in the assassination of the Emir Abd-el-Aziz by a Persian seyyid from Kerbela in 1800, at the age of 82 years. (Colonel Ross gives 1803 as the date of this event, but, according to members of the Ibn Saoud family themselves, it happened three years earlier; a date which accords better with other events.)

In 1801, a first expedition was despatched against Oman under Selim-el-Hark, one of Saoud's lieutenants; and in the same year Saoud himself, to avenge his father's murder, marched northwards with 20,000 men to the Euphrates, and on the 20th of April sacked Kerbela, whence, having put all the male inhabitants to the sword and razed the tomb of Husseyn, he retired the same afternoon with an immense booty. The success of this attack, made in the name of a reformed Islam upon the stronghold of the Shiah heretics and within the nominal dominions of the

Sultan, spread consternation throughout the Mussulman world.

In 1802 the island of Bahreyn was reduced to tribute, and the Wahhabi power extended down the Eastern coast as far as Batinah on the Sea of Oman, and several of the Oman tribes embraced the Wahhabi faith, and became tributary to Ibn Saoud.

In 1803, a quarrel having occurred between the Wahhabi Emir and Ghalib the Sherif of Mecca, Saoud marched into Hejaz with a large army, reduced Taif, and on the 1st of May entered Mecca, where he deposed the Sherif and appointed a Governor of his own. He did not, however, appear there as an enemy but as a pilgrim, and his troops were restrained from plunder, the only act of violence permitted being the destruction of the large tombs in the city, so that, as they themselves said, "there did not remain an idol in all that pure city." Then they abolished the taxes and customs; destroyed all instruments for the use of tobacco and the dwellings of those who sold hashish or who lived in open wickedness. Saoud returned to Nejd, having received the submission of all Central Arabia, including the holy city of Medina. This may be considered as the zenith of the Wahhabi power. Law and order prevailed under a central government, and the Emir on his return to Deriyeh issued a proclamation promising strict protection of life, property, and commerce throughout his dominions. This fortunate state of things continued for several years.

In 1807 Saoud once more marched to the Euphrates and laid siege to Meshhed Ali, but failed to capture that walled town and was forced to retreat.

In 1809 he collected an army of 30,000 men with the intention of attacking Bagdad, but disturbances having broken out in Nejd he abandoned his intention and marched instead with his army on pilgrimage to Mecca, whence he returned home by Medina, now annexed to his empire.

In Oman the Wahhabi arms continued to gain ground, and their name seems first to have become known in India in connexion with piratical raids committed on the Indian Sea. This led to an expedition undertaken in 1809 by the English against Ras-el-Kheymah on the Persian Gulf. But in spite of this, the Wahhabis advanced next year to Mattrah, a few miles only from Muscat, and to Bahreyn, which was occupied by them and received a Wahhabi governor.

In 1810 Saoud invaded Irak, and in 1811 his son Abdallah arrived close to Bagdad on a plundering raid, while another Wahhabi army, under Abu Nocta, a slave of the Emir's, invaded Syria and held Damascus to ransom. In Syria, indeed, for some years tribute had been paid by the desert towns of the Hauran and the districts east of Jordan to Nejd; and it seemed probable that the new Arabian Empire would extend itself to the Mediterranean, and Abd-el-Wahhabi's reformation to all the Arab race. A coalition of the Northern Bedouins, however, under Eddrehi Ibn Shaalan, Sheykh of the Roala, saved Damascus from Abu Nocta, and after sustaining a defeat from them on the Orontes the Wahhabi army returned to Nejd.

The danger, however, to orthodox Islam was now recognized, and in the same year, 1811, the Ottoman Sultan, urged by his Suni subjects to recover the holy places of Arabia to orthodox keeping, resolved on serious measures against Nejd. Matters had been brought to a crisis the year before by an act of fanaticism on the part of Saoud which had roused the indignation of all sects in Islam against him. On the occasion of a fourth pilgrimage which he had then made, he had caused the tomb of the prophet to be opened at Medina and the rich jewels and precious relics it contained to be sold or distributed among his soldiers, an act of sacrilege which it was impossible to tolerate. The Sultan was reminded that one of the claims

on which his ancestors of the House of Ottoman rested their tenure to the Caliphate was that they possessed the Holy Places, and he was called upon to assert his protectorate of Mecca and Medina by force. It is probable, indeed, that only the great interests at stake in Europe during the previous years of the century had delayed vigorous action. The invasion of Egypt by Napoleon, and the disorganisation of the Turkish Empire resulting from it, had contributed not a little to the Wahhabi successes. Now, however, Egypt was under the rule of Mehemet Ali, and to his vigorous hands the Sultan entrusted the duty of punishing the Ibn Saouds. The absence of the Emir's armies in the north gave a favourable opportunity to the Egyptian arms, a force of 8000 men was despatched to Hejaz, and Mecca was occupied by Tusun Pasha without resistance. On advancing inland, however, beyond Taif, Tusun was met by Abdullah ibn Saoud, and defeated in the desert with the loss of half his army; nor was he able to do more than hold his own in Mecca until relieved from Egypt.

In 1813, Mehemet Ali, impatient of his son's failure, went in person to Arabia, and seized Ghalib the Sherif, whom he suspected of Wahhabism, at Mecca and sent him prisoner to Cairo. Tusun was again entrusted with the command of an expedition destined for Nejd, but was again met and defeated beyond Taif in the spring of 1814.

In April 1814, while preparations were being pressed for a renewal of the campaign, Saoud Ibn Saoud the Wahhabi Emir, died, and Abdallah, his son and recognized successor, was acknowledged without opposition, chief of the Wahhabis.

In January 1815, Mehemet Ali inflicted a first serious defeat on the Wahhabi army, and Tusun having occupied Medina advanced into Kasim, in northern Nejd, where

he took possession of Ras, at that time capital of the district.

Negotiations were opened from that point with the Emir Abdallah who had retired with his army to Aneyzeh; and these resulted to the astonishment of every one (for Abdallah still had a powerful army) in the Emir's submission.

It is probable that in thus yielding, Abdallah felt his position in Nejd insecure. The Bedouins though subdued had never accepted the Wahhabi rule but on compulsion, and many of them were openly siding with the Turks, while his late defeat had destroyed much of his soldier's prestige. Be that as it may, the Emir agreed to the following stringent terms at Aneyzeh.

1st. He acknowledged as suzerain the Sultan of Turkey.

2nd. He agreed to give hostages for future conduct, and even, if required, to present himself in person at Constantinople.

3rd. He would deliver over Deriyeh, his capital, to a governor appointed by the Sultan; and

4th. He would restore the jewels plundered from Medina on the occasion of his father's visit in 1810.

On these conditions peace was concluded between the Emir and Tusun, and Abdallah gave the hostages required. He did not, however, give over Deriyeh, but proceeded on the contrary to prepare it for a siege. Neither did Mehemet Ali, when he learned that Abdallah refused to come to Egypt in person, nullify the peace. Tusun was recalled, and Ibrahim, his second son, appointed commander of the army in Arabia in his stead.

In September 1816 Ibrahim Pasha left Egypt at the head of a considerable force and proceeded to the scene of action.

The first encounter seems to have taken place at Ma' Wiyah, where Abdallah ibn Saoud attacked the Egyptian

army and suffered a signal defeat. On this occasion Ibrahim Pasha put to death all prisoners taken. The pasha then advanced with 4000 infantry and 1200 cavalry, besides contingents of the friendly Arab tribes, Beni-Kháled, Muteyr, 'Oteybah, Harb, and Suhool against Ras, which was held by a Wahhabi garrison. Before this town Ibrahim Pasha suffered a serious check, and after besieging it for three and a half months, and losing 3000 men, he was obliged to agree to an armistice and abandon the siege. The Egyptian general, however, masking Ras, continued to advance eastwards on 'Aneyzah and the Emir retired south to Bereydah. After six days' bombardments, the forts of 'Aneyzah surrendered, and the entire district of Kasim then submitted to the Egyptian commander. Abdallah retired on Shakrah, a town in the district of Woshem, and Ibrahim Pasha took Bereydah, where he halted two months for reinforcements. During this time the pasha succeeded in detaching from the Wahhabi cause many of those Bedouins who still remained faithful to Ibn Saoud. Among the first to join the Egyptians had been Feysul-el-Dawish, Sheikh of the Muteyr, who, animated by an ancient feud with the Ibn Saouds, was readily persuaded by Ibrahim with the promise of being installed Governor of Nejd, a promise which the pasha had no intention of fulfilling.

Having received at Bereydah a reinforcement of 800 men, and two guns, as well as supplies of provisions and ammunition, Ibrahim Pasha was able to continue his advance on Shakrah at the head of 4500 Turkish, Albanian, and Moorish troops in addition to Arab contingents. About 10,000 camels accompanied the force, and the infantry soldiers were usually mounted two and two on camels. The Emir Abdallah meantime retired on his capital, wasting the country before the enemy, and sending the surplus cattle and flocks to Hasa. This was in the latter

part of December, 1817. In the following month the Turkish army appeared before Shakrah, which was regularly approached under the direction of a French engineer, M. Vaissière, and capitulated on the 22nd of January, 1818. The lives of the garrison were spared, but they were deprived of their arms, and had to engage not to serve again under the Wahhabi Emir. Some time after, when Deriyeh had fallen, Ibrahim Pasha caused the fortifications of Shakrah to be demolished.

Abdallah ibn Saoud had now retreated to Deriyeh and before following him up to the capital Ibrahim Pasha judged it advisable to turn aside from the direct route to take the town of Dhoramah. At that place he encountered a spirited resistance, several of his men being killed. In revenge for this, the male inhabitants were put to the sword, the town pillaged and destroyed, and the women given up to the brutality of the Turkish soldiery. Only the governor and his guard, who had shut themselves in a citadel, were suffered to escape with their lives.

Detained by rains, it was March before Ibrahim Pasha advanced on Deriyeh which town he invested in April with a force of 5500 horse and foot and twelve pieces of artillery, including two mortars and two howitzers. Shortly after, reinforcements and convoys of supplies reached the Turkish camp from Medina and Busrah. The siege operations were for some time conducted without any success to the Turkish arms, and in the latter part of the month of May an explosion having occurred by which the pasha lost all his spare ammunition, his position became extremely critical. Indeed, the indomitable personal courage and good example of Ibrahim alone saved the army from disaster. The troops suffered much from dysentery and ophthalmia, and the Wahhabis thought to overwhelm the besiegers by a sortie in force. The attack was however repulsed and the opportunity lost

to the besieged; for soon after the engagement caravans with fresh supplies of ammunition and provisions reached the Egyptian camp, and then reinforcements of infantry and cavalry. News was also received of the approach of Khalil Pasha from Egypt with 3000 fresh troops. Early in September the Emir sent a flag of truce to request an audience of the pasha. This was accorded, and the Wahhabi chief was kindly received, but was informed that the first and indispensable condition of peace was the attendance of Abdallah in person at Cairo. The Emir asked twenty four hours for reflection, which delay was granted, and at the expiration of the time he returned to the pasha's camp and intimated his willingness to fulfil the condition imposed, provided Ibrahim would guarantee that his life would be spared. Ibrahim Pasha replied that he had no authority himself to bind the Sultan and the Viceroy on that point, but that he thought both were too generous to put him to death. Abdallah then pleaded for his family and prayed that Deriyeh and his adherents there should be spared. These terms were conceded and a peace concluded. The ill-starred Emir at once set out on his journey under a strong escort, and on reaching Cairo, was courteously received by Mehemet Ali, who forwarded him to Constantinople with a strong appeal for his pardon. The government of the Porte was, however, implacable: Abdallah ibn Saoud was paraded ignominiously through the streets of the capital for three days, and then, with his companions in captivity, was publicly beheaded.

Thus ends the first epoch of the Wahhabi rule in Nejd. During the twenty-three years which followed the destruction of Deriyeh, Nejd continued to be a province of Egypt; sometimes occupied by Egyptian troops, sometimes tributary only. When Ibrahim Pasha first appeared in Nejd, he commanded the sympathies of a great part of the population, and especially in Jebel Shammar, Kasim,

and Hasa, where he was received rather as a deliverer from the Wahhabi yoke, than as a foreign conqueror. No Turkish army had previously been seen in Central Arabia; and the Arabs of the interior, when not fanatically biassed, had no special hatred of them. But the Turkish and Albanian troops left in garrison by Ibrahim soon excited by their cruelties the enmity of the people; and as early as 1822 a first massacre of a Turkish garrison occurred at Riad, the new capital of Nejd (for Deriyeh was never rebuilt). This was followed in 1823 and 1824 by a successful rising of the Arabs under Turki ibn Saoud (see pedigree), and the re-establishment of his family as sovereign in Aared. Turki seized Riad, drove out the Egyptian troops still remaining in Nejd, and as leader of a popular movement against the foreigner, was recognized Emir by most of the tribes of Central Arabia.

For ten years—1824 to 1834—Turki consolidated his power in Nejd, Hasa, and even Oman, the whole coast of the Persian Gulf to Ras-el-Had acknowledging him and paying tribute. He, however, himself paid tribute to the Government of Egypt, which accorded countenance to his action in Arabia.

In 1834, Turki ibn Saoud was assassinated by a relative, Meshari, who was in turn put to death by Turki's son, Feysul, now recognised Emir in his father's stead.

In 1838, Feysul, having neglected or refused to pay tribute to Egypt, Mehemet Ali sent a force under Jomail Bey to depose him, and to establish Khalid, a rival claimant of the Ibn Saoud family, as Emir at Riad. Feysul then fled to Hasa, and Khalid, supported by a portion of the people of Aared and by reinforcements from Egypt under Khurshid Pasha, usurped the throne, but was shortly set aside by the Egyptian commanders, who established Egyptian government throughout Nejd. Feysul meanwhile had surrendered to them, and been sent prisoner to Cairo. The

second Egyptian occupation of Nejd lasted for two years. Then the greater part of the troops were recalled, and Khalid left as Valy for the Turkish government.

In 1842, Abdallah ibn Theneyan ibn Saoud headed a revolt against Khalid, who with his few remaining Egyptian troops was ejected from Riad; and Feysul, having escaped from his prison in Cairo, reappeared in Aared, and was everywhere acknowledged as Emir. From this time neither the Egyptian nor the Turkish government have exercised any authority in Nejd.

Under Feysul, whose reign lasted after his restoration for twenty-three years, nearly all the former territories of the Wahhabi empire were re-conquered. Oman in 1845 was reduced to tribute; Hasa was forced to accept Wahhabi governors, and in Feysul's last years Kasim also was conquered. Jebel Shammar, which on the overthrow of the first Nejd empire by Ibrahim Pasha had reverted to independence under the Ibn Ali family of the Beni Temim, was now also annexed nominally to the Wahhabi state. With Feysul's help, Abdallah ibn Rashid, Sheykh of the Shammar, established himself at Haïl, and paying tribute to the Emir acknowledged his sovereignty. Only in Bahreyn were his arms unsuccessful, and that owing to the support given to the Bahreyn sheykhs by England.

In the later years of his life Feysul became blind, and the management of affairs fell to his son Abdallah, who by his fanaticism and his cruelty alienated the Bedouin population from his standard, and prepared matters for a third intervention on the part of the Turks.

Before narrating, however, the last episode of Arabian misfortune and Turkish annexation, it will be necessary to explain briefly the views and pretensions of the Ottoman Sultans with respect to Arabia.

The first appearance of the Turks in the peninsula dates from 1524, when Selim I., having conquered Egypt and

usurped the Caliphate, till then held by members of the Abbaside family, took military possession of the holy places, Mecca and Medina, and annexed Yemen to his dominions. Beyond the districts immediately bordering on the Red Sea, however, no part of Arabia proper was at that time claimed by the Sultans; and in the following century a national insurrection drove them even from these, so that with the exception of the pilgrim roads from Cairo and Damascus, the Turks made no pretension of being masters in the Peninsula.

Ibrahim Pasha's expedition had been made not in assertion of a sovereign right, but as an act of chastisement and retaliation on a hostile sect; and once the Wahhabi government crushed, little care had been taken in retaining Nejd as a possession. The sultans were at that time far too anxiously occupied with their position in Europe to indulge in dreams of conquest in Asia, and were, from a military point of view, too weak for unprofitable enterprises not absolutely necessary. But at the close of the Crimean war the Turkish army was thoroughly reorganised, thanks to the English loan, which made its equipment with arms of precision possible; and the Sultan, finding himself in the possession of unaccustomed power, used it for the reduction first of the outlying districts of the Empire which had shaken off his yoke, and next of those tribes on its borders which appeared easiest of conquest. The frontier lands of Syria and Kurdistan were thus brought back into subjection, the Euphrates and Tigris valleys, independent since the days of Tamerlane, were occupied in force, and Irak was once more placed under the Imperial system of tax and conscription. The Suez Canal was opened, and Arabia, accessible hitherto by land only, was now for the first time within easy reach of Constantinople. With the sense of increased power, born of full coffers and an army ready and equipped for action,

new dreams of conquest came to the Imperial government. The Sultan remembered what he seemed to have forgotten, that he was heir to the Arabian caliphate, and his Ministers of the day based on this fact a claim to all Arabia. The garrisons of Mecca and the Hejaz were increased, an expedition was despatched against Yemen, and Midhat Pasha, a man of a restless, unquiet temper, was appointed Governor of Bagdad, with orders to watch his time for extending the Sultan's influence in any direction that might seem to him advisable. The opportunity soon came.

In 1865 Feysul ibn Saoud died, and the Wahhabi State which under him had regained so much of its former power, was once more weakened by internal dissension. Feysul left two sons, Abdallah and Saoud, the former a strict Wahhabi, but the latter holding liberal opinions, national rather than religious. Each put himself at the head of a party; Abdallah of the townsmen in Aared who were still fanatically attached to the reformed doctrine, and Saoud of the Bedouins. For a while they divided Feysul's inheritance between them, but coming to blows the younger brother forced the elder to fly from Aared, and Saoud established himself there as sole Emir. Jebel Shammar meanwhile and Kasim became completely independent, and Hasa and the rest of the maritime districts refused any longer to pay tribute.

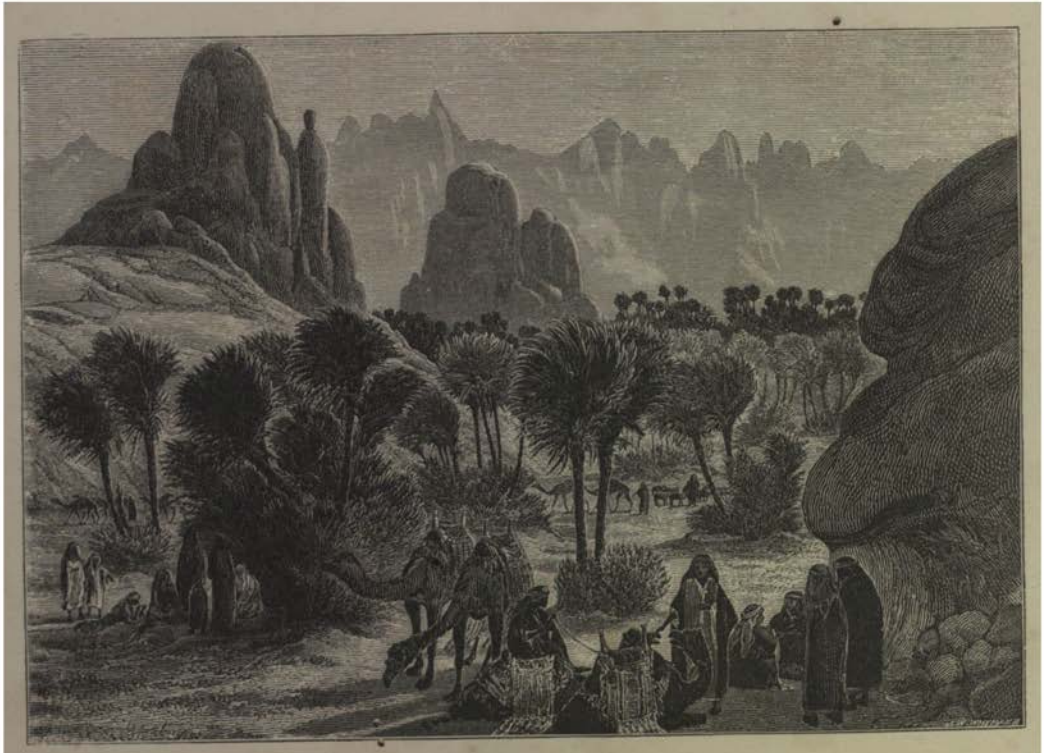
In 1871 Abdallah, turned out of Aared, made his way with a few followers to Jebel Shammar, where Metaab Ibn Rashid was then Emir, and from that asylum (for he was treated there as a guest) put himself into communication with Midhat at Bagdad. Midhat, who saw in this circumstance an opportunity such as he had been instructed to seek, readily responded; and at once issued a proclamation in which the sovereign power of the Sultan over Nejd was assumed, and Abdallah referred to as Caimakam or Deputy Governor of that province. It was notified, moreover, that

a Turkish force would be despatched from Bagdad "to restore order, and to maintain the said Caimakam against his rebellious brother."

After some opposition on the part of the Indian Government, which for many years had insisted upon absolute peace being maintained in the Persian gulf, a rule which had been agreed to by all the chiefs of the Arabian coast, including the people of Hasa and the Wahhabi government, and which had been attended with excellent results, a military expedition was despatched by sea to Hasa. It consisted of 4000 to 5000 Turkish regulars, under Nazfi Pasha, and disembarked at Katif in the month of June. Abdallah in the meantime had returned to Nejd, and having collected a body of adherents, in union with the Beni Kahtan tribe, attacked Saoud from the west; but was defeated and took refuge in the Turkish camp.

Dissensions nevertheless broke out in Riad and forced Saoud to take the field against a third rival, Abdallah ibn Turki, at whose hands he sustained a defeat, and he was in his turn forced to retire to Katr. The Turks had now occupied all the seaboard of Hasa, and the inland fort and town of Hofhuf, whence they entered into communication with this Abdallah ibn Turki, whom they named Mudir of Riad, "pending the arrival there of Abdallah ibn Feysul;" but before the end of the year, Midhat announced that in consequence of a petition received by the Sultan from the principal inhabitants of Nejd* the Ibn Saoud family had ceased to reign, and that the country should henceforth be administered by a Turkish Governor. Nafiz Pasha was appointed in the same announcement Muteserrif or Governor of Nejd, and Abdallah was entirely put aside. The Emir Abdallah thereupon fled from the Turkish camp in Hasa to Riad.

* This seems to have been a forgery.



FORTRESS OF AGDE. [*Vol. II., p. 266.*

In 1872 Raouf Pasha, who had succeeded Midhat at Bagdad, opened negotiations with Saoud, and induced him to send his brother Abderrahman to Bagdad, where he was retained a prisoner till 1874.

In the same year Saoud returned to Riad, and once more ejected his brother Abdallah, who retired to Queyt, leaving Saoud in undisturbed possession till his death in 1874.

In 1873, the Turkish regular troops were withdrawn, and Bizi ibn Aréar, Sheykh of the Beni Kháled and hereditary enemy of the Ibn Saouds, was left in Hasa as Ottoman Governor, with a garrison of zaptiehs.

In 1874, Abderrahman, brother of the Emir Saoud, having been released from Bagdad, raised a revolt in Hasa, and was joined by the Al Mowak, Ajman and other Bedouin tribes, with whom he marched on Hofhuf and besieged Bizi there with his garrison, many of whom were slain. Whereupon Nassr Pasha was sent from Bussora with a battalion of regulars, by sea to Hasa, at the news of whose approach Abderrahman retired to Riad. Nassr then marched on Hofhuf and relieved the garrison, which were shut up in the fort; but gave the town to pillage. For several days the Turkish soldiers and their auxiliaries indulged in indiscriminate massacre and plunder of the inhabitants; men, women and children were shot down, and women were openly treated with the brutality peculiar to such occasions. It is said in extenuation that the Turkish officers remonstrated with the Pasha, but that he replied that it was necessary to make an example.

Shortly after this the Emir Saoud died at Riad, it has been said of poison; and in 1875 Abdallah returned to Nejd, where he found Abderrahman, his half brother, established. The brothers, after some disputing, came to an amicable arrangement with respect to the chief power, Abdallah holding the title of Emir, and Abderrahman of chief minister. Such is now the state of things at Riad. Over-

tures from the Turkish Government have been lately opened with the Emir, on the basis of his becoming Governor of Nejd as Turkish nominee, but have met with no response. Abdallah, it would seem, exercises little authority out of Riad, and none whatever out of Aared. He represents the party of Wahhabi fanaticism there, which is rapidly declining, and there are schemes on foot among the Bedouins and certain members of the Ibn' Saoud family, for starting a new pretender in the person of one of the sons of Saoud, and claiming the protection of England. The power of the Ibn Saoud family in Arabia may, however, be considered at an end.

Hasa and the seaboard from Katr to Queyt is now held by the Turks, under whose system of stirring up tribal feuds among the Arabs, the commercial prosperity of the coast is rapidly disappearing. Piracy, under the protection of the Ottoman flag, has once more become the mode of life with the coast villagers, and intrigues have been opened with the Sheykhs of the districts eastwards, to induce them to accept similar protection on the promise of similar license.

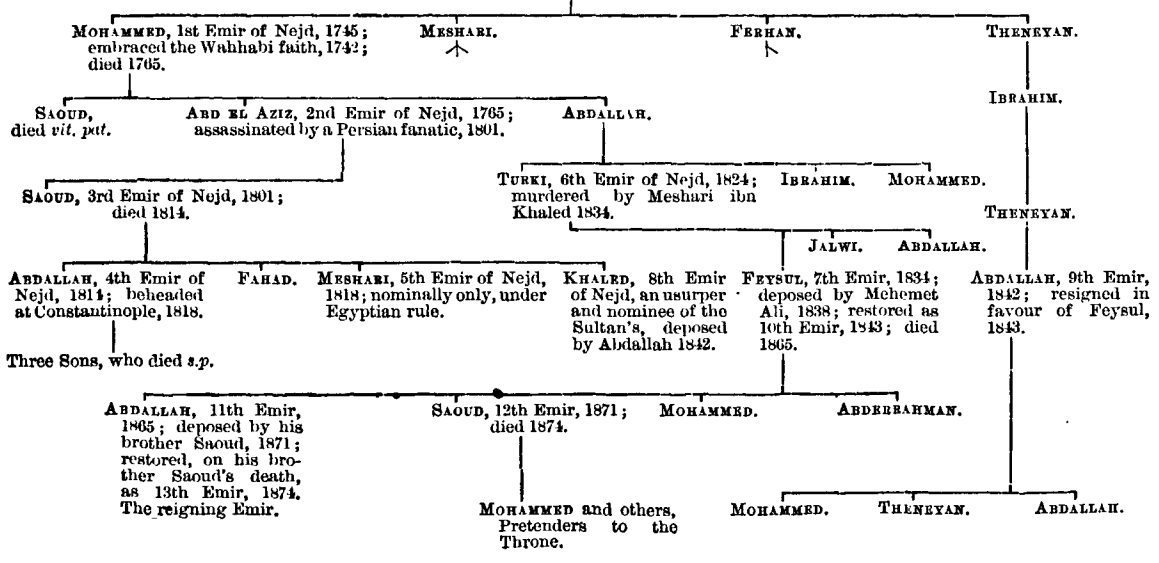
Meanwhile all that is truly national in thought and respectable in feeling in central Arabia, is grouping itself around Mohammed Ibn Rashid, the Emir of Jebel Shammar, and it is to Haïl that we must look for a restoration, if such be possible, of the ancient glories and prosperity of the Nejd Empire.

W. S. B.

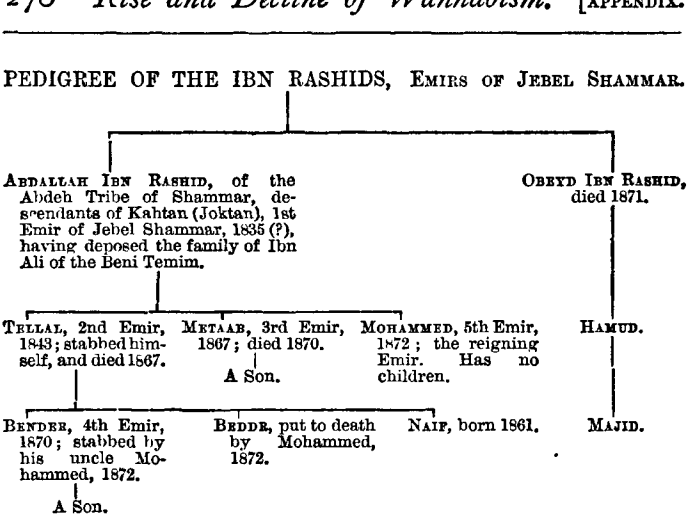
PEDIGREE OF THE IBN SAOUDS, EMIRS OF NEJD.

SAOUD IBN MOHAMMED,

Descended from Rabiia ibn Maane, Emir of Deriyeh in the 15th century, himself of the Mesalik tribe of Anazeh, deriving through Aduan from Ishmael, the son of Abraham.


MOHAMMED, 1st Emir of Nejd, 1745; embraced the Wahhabi faith, 1742; died 1765.
MESHARI.
FERHAN.
THENEYAN.
IBRAHIM.
SAOUD, died *vit. pat.*
ABD EL AZIZ, 2nd Emir of Nejd, 1765; assassinated by a Persian fanatic, 1801.
ABDALLAH.
SAOUD, 3rd Emir of Nejd, 1801; died 1814.
TURKI, 6th Emir of Nejd, 1824; murdered by Meshari ibn Khaled 1834.
IBRAHIM.
MOHAMMED.
THENEYAN.
JALWI.
ABDALLAH.
ABDALLAH, 4th Emir of Nejd, 1814; beheaded at Constantinople, 1818.
FAHAD.
MESHARI, 5th Emir of Nejd, 1818; nominally only, under Egyptian rule.
KHALED, 8th Emir of Nejd, an usurper and nominee of the Sultan's, deposed by Abdallah 1842.
FEYSUL, 7th Emir, 1834; deposed by Mehemet Ali, 1838; restored as 10th Emir, 1843; died 1865.
ABDALLAH, 9th Emir, 1842; resigned in favour of Feysul, 1843.
Three Sons, who died *s.p.*
ABDALLAH, 11th Emir, 1865; deposed by his brother Saoud, 1871; restored, on his brother Saoud's death, as 13th Emir, 1874. The reigning Emir.
SAOUD, 12th Emir, 1871; died 1874.
MOHAMMED.
ABDERRAHMAN.
MOHAMMED and others, Pretenders to the Throne.
MOHAMMED.
THENEYAN.
ABDALLAH.

PEDIGREE OF THE IBN RASHIDS, EMIRS OF JEBEL SHAMMAR.


ABDALLAH IBN RASHID, of the Abdeh Tribe of Shammar, descendants of Kahtan (Joktan), 1st Emir of Jebel Shammar, 1835 (?), having deposed the family of Ibn Ali of the Beni Temim.
OBEYD IBN RASHID, died 1871.
TELLAL, 2nd Emir, 1843; stabbed himself, and died 1867.
METAAB, 3rd Emir, 1867; died 1870.
A Son.
MOHAMMED, 5th Emir, 1872; the reigning Emir. Has no children.
HAMUD.
BENDER, 4th Emir, 1870; stabbed by his uncle Mohammed, 1872.
A Son.
BEDDR, put to death by Mohammed, 1872.
NAIF, born 1861.
MAJID.

MEMORANDUM ON THE EUPHRATES VALLEY RAILWAY,

And its Kindred Schemes of Railway Communication between The Mediterranean and The Persian Gulf.

Having now completed the whole journey by land between Alexandretta and Bushire, the extreme points usually mentioned as terminuses for a Perso-Mediterranean Railway, and being, in so far, capable of estimating the real resources of the countries such a railway would serve, I make no apology for the few remarks I here offer on the subject. I do so with the more confidence because I perceive that of the many advocates these railway schemes have had, not one has taken the trouble of thus travelling over the whole distance, and that nearly all calculations made regarding them, are based on a survey of a part only of the road. It is seldom indeed that those who write or speak about a Euphrates valley railway, have done more than cross that river at Bir, or that they carry their arguments much beyond a choice of the most suitable Mediterranean port for a terminus, a kind of reasoning sufficient, no doubt, for the purpose before them, but in reality misleading. I believe, that one and all of these schemes are based upon a deficient knowledge of the facts.

A railway of this sort, to Englishmen, is naturally attractive, and presents itself to them in a double aspect, political and commercial. Politically it has been repre-

sented as an alternative route for troops to India, more expeditious than that by Suez; commercially as a scheme that will open up a rich but neglected country to the operations of trade.

With regard to the first I would remark first that, having gone through the calculation carefully, I find that four days is the total saving between London and Calcutta which a line of railway from Scanderun or Tripoli to Bushire would effect, an advantage quite inadequate to the risk of transhipment, and the fatigue of a long desert journey; secondly that the Persian Gulf is both hotter and less healthy than the Red Sea, and that the Syrian ports of the Mediterranean are peculiarly liable to fever; and thirdly that such a line could be used for the conveyance of English troops, by permission only of whatever power might be in possession of Asia Minor.

When I was in India last summer I made acquaintance with a great number of British officials, and I was at some pains to learn from them their views on this "alternative route." I will not say that their answers to my questions were invariably the same, but I think I am making no mistake in affirming, that the consensus of intelligent opinion among them is wholly adverse to the notion. "The Euphrates route," say they, "would be of exceedingly little use to us. The mails, to be sure, would go that way, and we should get our letters from England three or four days sooner; but, politically speaking, the mails are a matter of less consequence than they were. Nowadays all official work of real importance is transacted by telegraph, and when the mails come in afterwards, their interest has been forestalled. It would matter little at Simla or Calcutta whether they had taken three weeks or a fortnight on the road. Trade would certainly benefit somewhat in this way, but Government very little. As regards the sending of troops overland, there could be no question of it, as long

as the Suez route was open; and if England cannot keep the Suez route open, she had better give up India at once. No Secretary at War would be so ill-advised as to send troops, with the risk of cholera and over-fatigue, by the land journey as long as they could be marched on board at Plymouth, and landed fresh at Bombay." "Not even in case of a new mutiny?" I asked. "Not even in a mutiny. People in England have no idea of the meaning of a thousand-mile railway journey in desert countries. For six months in the year no passengers would go that way, except, maybe, an occasional officer on a three months' furlough. We should not take our wives and children there at any time. The extra trouble and expense have prevented most of us from making use of the Brindisi line, which really saves us a week and avoids the Bay of Biscay; so we certainly should not face the Persian Gulf for the sake of four days. The Persian Gulf is hotter than the Red Sea." Lastly, as to the strategical importance of the Euphrates and Tigris districts to India, I found that these were considered, even by the extremest advocates of conquest, quite out of our line of march for many years to come. The veriest Russophobe could not be made to believe, that a modern army would attempt a march through any passes in Asia Minor, or down any Euphrates valley, on India.

It may therefore be dismissed from our calculations that India stands in need of a railway from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. The political advantage, if advantage there be, would lie solely with Turkey, or with whatever power may eventually become master of Armenia and Kurdistan.

As a commercial speculation, the Euphrates railway scheme is, I believe, equally delusive. The additional cost and risk of transhipment would be an effectual bar to through traffic; while local traffic alone, would be insufficient to secure the financial success of the line. The Euphrates and Tigris valleys are often represented as rich

agricultural districts, waiting only the hand of the immigrant to become again what they were in classic and even mediæval times. It is argued that if, in the twelfth century, the Euphrates valley boasted such towns as Rakka, Karkesia, and Balis, such towns may exist again, and that a railway carried by that route to Bagdad, would surely revive the ancient wealth of a naturally wealthy district. But such an argument speedily vanishes on an examination of the facts.

1st. The Euphrates and Tigris valleys neither are nor ever were rich agriculturally. As corn-growing districts they cannot compare with the hill country immediately north of them, with northern Syria, the Taurus, or Kurdistan. They lie out of the reach of the regular winter rains, which cling to the hills, and for this reason are almost entirely dependent on irrigation for their fertility. At best, the Euphrates and Tigris valleys, through which a railway would pass, are inconsiderable strips of good land, hemmed in closely by a barren desert, and incapable of lateral extension or development. They are isolated, and have long ceased to lie on the track of commerce. At the present day they contain no place of importance, with the exception of the pilgrim shrines of Kerbela and Meshhed Ali, and the decayed city of Bagdad, nor along the greater part of their extent, more than a few villages, depending for their subsistence on the date-palm. They are, moreover, subject to the caprices of their great unmanageable rivers, which at flood time wreck half the valleys. The Euphrates for 150 miles, passes without alluvial belt of any kind, through a quite inhospitable desert, while lower down it loses itself in marshes at least as valueless. The Tigris, from Mosul to Bagdad, boasts but three inconsiderable villages, and from Bagdad to Bussorah, a poor half dozen. The Montefik country on the lower Euphrates, and the island enclosed within the Hindiyeh Canal, are the only important corn-growing districts now existing.

2nd. The great plain of Irak, the ancient Babylonia, is not only uncultivated now, but for the most part is uncultivable. A vast portion of it has been overflowed by the rivers, and converted into a swamp, while the rest is more absolutely barren than even the desert itself. It would seem that the water of the Tigris contains saltpetre in solution, and the plain below Bagdad, in the neighbourhood of the river, is in many places covered with a saltpetrous deposit, the result of over-irrigation in ancient days. The soil would seem to have been in some sort worked out. I believe, moreover, that from the denudation since ancient times of Armenia, from which the two rivers flow, their floods have become more sudden, and the water supply less calculable, and that the vast irrigation works from the Euphrates, which would be necessary before the fertility of Irak could be restored to what it then was, would still be liable to excessive flood and drought.

The ancient agricultural wealth of Babylonia was a purely artificial thing, depending upon a gigantic system of irrigation which has no parallel in anything now found in the world. When these vast works were begun is not known; but it must have been in an age of mankind when Asia was densely peopled and human labour cheap. Indeed, we may feel sure that only compulsory labour could have carried them out at all, for they would have ruined any treasury at any rate of wages. This can hardly be done again. There are no captive nations now to be impressed; no treasury capable of providing the funds. We see India, with its really great population, and its comparatively great wealth, sinking under the burden of irrigation works; and the miserable Arabs of Irak cannot be called on to square their shoulders and carry this far greater load. With all our knowledge, too, of engineering, there would still be some risk of failure; for the Euphrates and the Tigris are not rivers to be trifled with, as Midhat Pasha found to his

cost. I think it more than probable that in the day of Babylonian greatness, the flooding of both rivers was more regular and less subject to disasters of drought and excess than now. As I have said, the denudation of Armenia accounts, perhaps, for the destruction of Irak. In any case it is certain, that at the present moment the full energies of the existing population are required to preserve their footing, not to make new conquests on the river. Now, as I am writing, Lower Mesopotamia is expecting famine from the failure of the Tigris, for not an acre of wheat can be sown without its flooding. Last year all hands were at work damming out the Euphrates. These matters are worth considering.

3rd. In treating this question of Euphrates Valley communication, it seems to be forgotten that not only the circumstances of the Valley itself are changed, but those of all the world of Asia adjoining it.

To understand the present position of Mesopotamia and its adjacent lands, we must consider the history of their ruin. In the days of ancient Rome, not only the shores of the Mediterranean, African as well as European, but also all Western Asia, were a densely peopled empire. Even the lands beyond Roman jurisdiction were full of great cities, from Armenia, through the central plateau of Asia, to the edge of China. Land was everywhere taken up and everywhere of value, while a great surplus population was constantly being pushed out into poorer and still poorer districts by the struggle of life, until hardly a habitable corner of the old world remained unoccupied.

It is not surprising, then, that, with such a necessity for elbow room, the Euphrates and Tigris Valleys were early seized upon, and that at a later date, even poorer regions of the desert were conquered from sterility, and forced into the work of producing food. As long as Babylonia, and the kingdoms which succeeded it, maintained their fertility,

these valleys lay on the highway between them and Asia Minor. Even so lately as the twelfth century, Benjamin of Tudela, a Spanish Jew, found numerous large towns still flourishing in Upper Mesopotamia. Palmyra, at that day, was still a commercial city, containing with other inhabitants a population of two thousand Jews. On the Upper Euphrates he mentions five towns, and on the Tigris two or three. It must not, however, for a moment be supposed that these cities owed their wealth in any but a very small measure to agriculture. Palmyra and El Haddr, the two most important, never could have had more than a few cultivated acres attached to them, while the towns on the rivers, though making full use of the alluvial valleys, were essentially commercial. The high road between Aleppo and Bagdad then passed down the Euphrates as far as Kerkesia (Deyr?), whence striking across Mesopotamia to El Haddr, it joined the Tigris at Tekrit. Along this line cities were found at intervals, much as the posting-houses used to be found upon our own highways, and with the same reason for their existence. They gradually died, as these died, with the diversion of traffic from their route. Palmyra and El Haddr, which (to continue the posting-house metaphor) had no paddocks attached to them, were the first to disappear; and then one by one the river towns, which for a time had still struggled on with the aid of their fields, died too. In the thirteenth, and again in the sixteenth centuries, the terrible scourges of Mongul and Ottoman conquests passed over Asia, and swept the regions surrounding Mesopotamia clear of inhabitants. All Western Asia was at this time ruined; and the first result was the abandonment of outlying settlements, which only the stress of over-population elsewhere had ever brought into existence. The Tigris and Euphrates were gradually abandoned, and only the richest districts of Armenia, Kurdistan, and Syria retained. The Ottoman system of

misgovernment has done the rest; and now at the present day there is no surplus population eastwards nearer than China, which could supply the deficiency. Until Persia and Armenia are fully occupied, it is idle to expect the comparatively waste lands of Mesopotamia and the river banks to invite immigration. Russia may some day assimilate Asia Minor, and Asia Minor may some day again become populous, but until that is done Mesopotamia must wait.

On the other hand, Europe is as little likely to send emigrants to the banks of the Euphrates. With such large tracts of good land on the southern shores of the Mediterranean and in Syria, unoccupied, there is nothing to tempt agriculturists to poorer lands so far away. Mesopotamia has hardly a climate suited to northern Europeans, while Italians and Maltese (the only southern nations with a surplus population) find openings nearer home. It is equally idle to talk of coolies from India, or coolies from China. These only emigrate, on the prospect of immediate high wages, to countries where labour commands its full price, and capital is there to employ it. As mere emigrants in search of land they will not come.

4th. Although South-western Persia, through which the last 400 miles of a railroad to Bushire might be made to pass, has not suffered from the same physical causes which have ruined Babylonia, its present condition as regards population, production, and existing wealth, are hardly less unfortunate. The government of Persia, which burlesques all that we most complain of in Turkey, has succeeded in reducing the production of a district, one of the wealthiest in natural advantages of all Asia, practically to nothing. With the single exception of a tract of cultivated land lying between Dizful and Shustar, and another between Dilam and Bushire, the railway would pass through a country at present uninhabited even by wandering tribes possessed of pastoral wealth. The policy of the Persian government

in its dealings with Arabistan has been to depopulate, as the shortest and easiest mode of governing it, and the policy has been successful.

Still I consider, that a railway run along the edge of the Bactiari hills, would have a far better chance of attracting population towards it, than one in the Euphrates or Tigris valleys. The soil is naturally a very rich one, and the winter rainfall sufficient for agricultural purposes. Wherever cultivation exists it is remunerative, and the soil has not been worked out, as is the case in the plains. The line would doubtless serve the better peopled districts of Shirazd and Luristan; and Bebaban, Shustar and Dizful, would become once more important *entrepôts* for the wealth of the interior. With the security a railway would give, immigrants might even gradually arrive, and it is conceivable that the district might in the course of years be reclaimed, for it is well worth reclaiming, but the prospect is a distant one.

On the whole I would suggest that all calculations as to traffic should be based strictly on existing circumstances. It may be, that the present population and production are sufficient for the support of a railway, (I myself considerably doubt it), but investors should trust to these only. The future has only delusions in store for them. It is idle to quote the precedent of those American railways, carried through waste places, which have speedily attracted population, and through population, wealth. In Asia there is no surplus population anywhere to attract. Moreover there are existing circumstances of misgovernment, which no system of railways can cure, and till these are changed, it is idle to hope for other changes. Railways in Europe or in America, serve the interests of the people. In Turkey or in Persia they would serve the interests of their rulers only.

That readers may judge what the actual condition is, of the lands lying between the Mediterranean and the Persian

Gulf, I have put in tabular form the amount of cultivated and uncultivated land, of pasture and desert, afforded by the various lines of route which have been suggested for a railway. These are:

1.—*The Palmyra Route*, 555 miles.	Miles.
Tripoli to Homs, partial cultivation	70
Homs to Palmyra, a pastoral desert	120
Palmyra to Hitt, uninhabited desert	250
Hitt to Seglawieh, partial cultivation	65
Seglawieh to Bagdad, alluvial plain, uncultivated, for the most part uninhabited	50
Total under partial cultivation	135
,, desert or pastoral	420
Total	555

This route has nothing to recommend it except its shortness. It would pass through but one considerable town, Homs; it would serve no important agricultural district, and could count upon no local traffic. The greater part of its course is without water, fuel, inhabitants, or possibility of development. It would require considerable cutting and bridging (for ravines), and would have little strategical value.

2.—*The Euphrates Valley Route*, 625 miles.	Miles.
Lattakia or Alexandretta to Aleppo, cultivation	100
Aleppo to Deyr, pastoral	210
Deyr to Abu Camal, pastoral, partly cultivated	70
Abu Camal to Hitt, desert, with palm oases	130
Hitt to Seglawieh, partial cultivation	65
Seglawieh to Bagdad, alluvial plain, uncultivated, and mostly uninhabited	50
Total cultivated and partly cultivated	235
,, desert or pastoral	390
Total	625

This line passes through one town of eighty thousand inhabitants, Aleppo, and two small towns, Deyr and Ana, besides a few villages. It could count on very little local traffic; Deyr might export a little corn, Ana a few dates. Except in the northern portion it is not a sheep district. It has the advantages of water and fuel, but these would be to a certain extent neutralised if, as is probable, the line should have to pass along the desert above, instead of in the valley. In either case the construction would not be without expense, the river with its inundations causing constant obstruction below; while the desert above, is much broken with ravines. It could hardly pay the whole of its working expenses. Its principal advantage is, that in case of its being continued from Seglawieh to Bussorah, some miles would be saved, or a branch line might be made to Kerbela. The Euphrates line is strategically of advantage to Turkey, mainly as a check on the Bedouin tribes.

3.—*The Mesopotamian or Tigris Valley Route*, 700 miles.

	Miles.
Alexandretta or Lattakia to Aleppo, cultivation .	100
Aleppo to Orfa, cultivation	120
Orfa to Mosul, by Mardin, partial cultivation . .	250
Mosul to Bagdad by the right bank of the Tigris, pastoral	230
Total cultivated and partly cultivated .	470
,, pastoral	230
Total	700

This line has the advantage of passing through no absolutely desert district. It would be well watered throughout, and in the Tigris Valley would have a supply of fuel. It would, as far as Mosul, serve four large towns with an aggregate population of two hundred thousand inhabitants, besides numerous villages, and a nearly continuous agri-

cultural population. Its stations would serve as dépôts for the produce of Upper Syria, Armenia, and Kurdistan from the north, and of a fairly prosperous pastoral district from the south. Below Mosul, however, there would be but two small towns, Samara, and Tekrit, and hardly a village. The engineering difficulties of this route, in spite of several small rivers besides the Euphrates (which all three lines would have to cross), would probably be less than in the others. Upper Mesopotamia is a more even plain than the Syrian Desert, and southwards is but little intersected with ravines. This route is strategically of immense importance to Turkey, and is perhaps the best. I would, however, suggest, that commercially, a better line would be from Mosul by Kerkuk to Bagdad. This would continue through cultivated lands, and is the route recommended by the very intelligent Polish engineer, who surveyed it some years ago.

Beyond Bagdad the routes to the Persian Gulf would be—

	Miles.
1. Bagdad to Queyt by right bank of Euphrates, serving Kerbela, Meshhed Ali, and the district of Suk-esh-Shiokh	460
Or to Bussorah	400

This could be continued from Seglawieh, thereby saving fifty miles. It would serve two fairly flourishing agricultural districts, and should pass along the edge of the desert where the ground is nearly level. Queyt is a good port as to anchorage, but has no commercial importance. Bussorah is a river port much circumscribed by marshes.

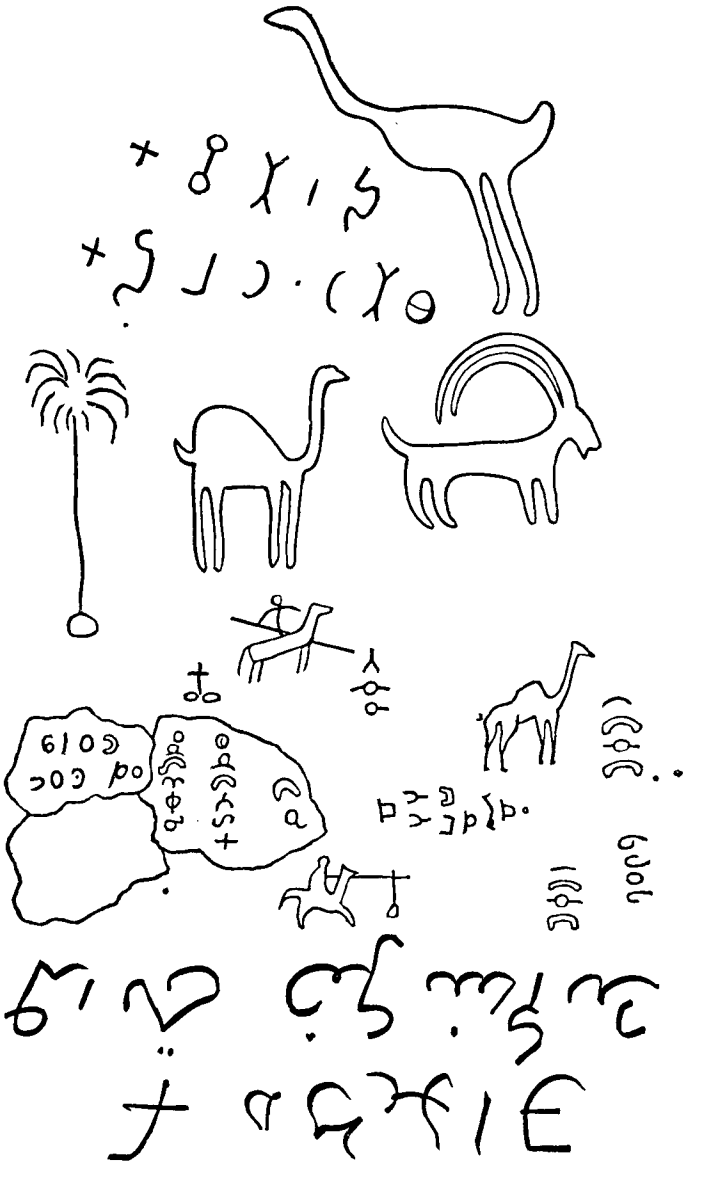
	Miles.
2. Bagdad to Mohamra by the left bank of the Tigris	320

This would be a difficult line to make, on account of the marshes, and would pass through a nearly uninhabited country. It has no advantage but its shortness.

	Miles.
3. Bagdad to Bushire, along the edge of the Hamrin Hills to Dizful, then by Shustar, Ram Hormuz, and Dilam	570

This line would be an expensive one, on account of the six large rivers it would have to cross, but it presents no other engineering difficulties. It should keep close under the Hamrin Hills to avoid marshy ground near the river. It is uninhabited as far as Dizful, though the soil is good and well watered. Dizful and Shustar are important commercial towns, being the principal markets of South Western Persia; the district between them is well cultivated. Beyond Shustar to Dilam there is but one inhabited place, Ram Hormuz (or Ramuz). There are a few villages along the shore of the Persian Gulf to Bushire, but very little cultivation. This route might be shortened by taking a direct line from Ali Ghurbi on the Tigris to Dilam, but it would then pass wholly through uninhabited country, swampy in places. On the whole I prefer the Dizful-Shustar route, as having better commercial prospects. These towns would supply no little traffic. Bushire is an important place, and would make the best terminus for a railway on the Gulf. I cannot, however, recommend any of these lines south of Bagdad as commercially promising for a railway.

W. S. B.



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on 15 October, 2018